



Balshagray Victoria Park  
Church of Scotland

# The Herald

**Christmas 2020**

**From our Interim Moderator, Rev Jonathan Keefe**

## **Covid Christmas Opportunities**

We've heard it said many times – This Christmas will be like no other we have experienced. Even if restrictions are eased there is still great uneasiness amongst some when it comes to social interactions. By this stage many of us crave it, but many of us are equally wary of it at the same time.

And most of our opportunities for mission as a fellowship at BVP at Christmas involve just that – fellowship! Meeting together to sing God's praises and worship the God who became flesh and dwelt among us. Inviting people in the parish along to a watchnight service, or a carol service where many of them do something they only do once per year – sing about God and his glory. Or invite family and friends to our homes for mulled wine and mince pies. We won't get the same opportunities this year to share the gospel with our parish and our families and loved ones.

So it causes us to think back to the reasons for sharing the gospel in the first place. Why do we as a fellowship, and as individual Christians seek mission opportunities? In the last chapter of Isaiah's prophecy it describes the church's mission in these terms. God is speaking about gathering his people, and sending his people out to 'declare [his] glory' to those who don't know about God's fame:

*For I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory, and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations... that have not heard my fame or*

*seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations. (Chapter 66:18-19)*

That's our task at BVP over the next month, not to encourage people to believe what we do, not to encourage them to be nicer folk or more generous folk, not even to give people a better quality of life. Rather to declare the glory and greatness of our God to family members, to friends, to work colleagues, to neighbours, to all who fit the category of not having heard of God's fame, and not having seen his glory.

May God open our own eyes to see more of his glory at this special time of year, and may he bless us as we seek to declare his glory to others in the month ahead, whether its onscreen, on the phone, or in person.

## **From our Session Clerk**

At the November meeting of the Kirk Session I informed elders that it was my intention to stand down as session clerk from 31st December 2020. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to serve in this role for 21years but after much prayerful consideration, I realise that now is the time to step down. BVP needs someone with fresh vision and impetus to take on this role as we move into the next stage of serving God.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in the congregation for their support and encouragement during my time as session clerk and I truly hope that the one who comes after me will have as much joy and satisfaction that I have had during my time.

Derek

## **Christian Aid**

The theme for this year's Christmas Appeal is " LOVE BUILDS HOPE FOR CHRISTMAS" and this is a reminder that you can still make a donation. Full details of how you can do this and how to find out more on the reasons for this appeal were in the November Herald. Please contact myself if you would like more information.

*Campbell Joss*

## **The 'Suffering Church' at Christmas**

Christmas is a very special time for Christians throughout the world, as we all unite to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. However, who would have thought back in February, that nine months later, we would be wondering if we will really be able to celebrate Christmas in the 'traditional way', with the singing of Christmas carols and enjoying all the usual heart-warming festive activities. Sadly, it still feels as if there is no light at the end of the tunnel, and so we wait with anticipation the outcome of the recently imposed 'Level 4' restrictions in the hope that we will all be able to enjoy a 'normal and blessed' Christmas with family and friends.

Despite all the difficulties that the Coronavirus Pandemic has caused throughout the world, as Christians, we should try to remain confident that God is still in control and that He is able to rule and over-rule in every situation and circumstance. If we think that life is difficult for us, then as Christmas approaches, please take time to reflect on how our Christian Brothers and Sisters who live in many different countries in the Far East and Africa will celebrate Christmas this year. It has always been difficult, but more so now than ever before. Not only are they struggling with the effects of Covid-19, but also the relentless persecution by Muslim and Hindu extremists plus discrimination by governments who do not allow Christians to worship freely and who try to suppress the Gospel, which we know is the Good News about Jesus Christ.

We are truly blessed by having the freedom to enjoy the happiness and pleasures associated with Christmas, but for many tens of thousands of Christians throughout the world, the situation will be quite different and even dangerous. The lack of tolerance towards the '*Christian Church*' is more prevalent in those countries which are Islamic. In many countries, the rights of Christians are swept aside, and thousands are subjected to imprisonment, punishment, fines, loss of basic human rights, confiscation of property, torture and sometimes death. Christmas will be very difficult for those Christians who are living under such oppressive conditions.

We should therefore be grateful that despite the current restrictions due to the Coronavirus, we are still able to attend church, worship God and celebrate Christmas without fear of harassment or personal danger. However, let us not be complacent, believing that the 'comfort zone' we find ourselves in, will not or cannot come under attack. Scripture makes it clear that we should expect to be persecuted for our faith.

*'Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for He is faithful that promised'. [Hebrews 10:23]*

God continues to work out His purposes for all those who have put their trust in His son the Lord Jesus Christ. May I encourage you this Christmas to reflect on the 'Suffering Church' and to continue to pray not just for those who are being persecuted, but also for the perpetrators of such heinous acts.

**CHINA** – the Chinese Communist Party has stepped up its ban on the printing of Christian and other religious material, by threatening to close printing businesses and impose large fines or imprisonment on the owners. Christian literature is not available in book shops and religious material can-not be sent in the post. Many inspections were carried out on printing companies during September looking for 'prohibited content'.

**NIGERIA** – heavily armed Islamic Militants are continuing to cause death and destruction on a massive scale in many parts of Northern Nigeria, and hundreds of Christians were taken as hostages during the past few months. Homes, businesses, and churches have been severely damaged or destroyed. Sadly, the government and the military are failing to provide adequate protection for residents living in mainly Christian villages.

**EGYPT** – after a five-month break, the government has issued licences to 100 Christian churches allowing them to open once again for worship. However, there are circa 1950 churches still waiting to obtain a licence. The wheel is turning, albeit slowly.

***Please remember the 'Suffering Church' this Christmas.***

*Robert Belmore*

## Nine Lessons and Carols

Although I'm sure there will be one from King's College Cambridge on Christmas Eve, something I will really miss this year is our own Service of Nine Lessons and Carols at BVP, with so many different members of the congregation contributing, the choir in fine voice and all of us having a chance to sing those well known carols again. What I particularly like is that it is perhaps the only service of the year when the gospel is proclaimed by simply letting scripture speak for itself.

For those who will also miss this service, here are the lessons which are usually read – well worth re-reading in one go.

First Lesson: Genesis 3: 8–15; 17–19 God tells sinful Adam that he has lost the life of Paradise and that his seed will bruise the serpent's head.

Second Lesson: Genesis 22: 15–18 God promises to faithful Abraham that in his this

Third Lesson: Isaiah 9: 2; 6–7. The prophet foretells the coming of the Saviour.

Fourth Lesson: Isaiah 11: 1–3a; 4a; 6–9 The peace that Christ will bring is foreshown.

Fifth Lesson: Luke 1: 26–35; 38 The angel Gabriel salutes the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Sixth Lesson: Luke 2: 1; 3–7 St Luke tells of the birth of Jesus.

Seventh Lesson: Luke 2: 8–16 The shepherds go to the manger.

Eighth Lesson: Matthew 2: 1–12 The wise men are led by the star to Jesus.

Ninth Lesson John 1: 1–14 St John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation.

What about the carols? Well even in 2020 and at level 4, we're allowed to sing at home (suitably distanced and not too loudly) and we know the words and the tunes, so we can have our own Service of Nine Lessons and Carols!

*John Goddard*

## Christmas Services (or not)

Due to the restrictions arising from the Covid pandemic, Christmas services this year are severely, or possibly completely, curtailed.

- There will be no Carol singing in the Square on the Saturday before Christmas.
- There will not be the usual Service of Nine lessons and Carols.
- As last year, there will no Christmas Eve Family Service at 7pm
- There will not be the usual informal Christmas Day service.
- If the current number of twenty people permitted at worship services remains in place for Christmas Eve, the Watchnight service will be cancelled but a recorded service will be available on the church website (<https://bvp.org.uk>).
- If the number people permitted at worship services increases to fifty or more for Christmas Eve, there will be a Watchnight service. Places at this Christmas Eve Watchnight Service **must be booked in advance** by Sunday 20th December. Please phone Derek Robertson (0141 954 4343) to book these. Signs indicating this will be posted at the entranceway to the church. Even if extended family bubbles are allowed elsewhere during the Christmas season, the social distancing if September (Lockdown 3) edition of the Herald, will still apply. This means that if large family groups arrive they may not be able to sit together.

After reading all this you may be wondering if there is any good news. There is. In spite of Covid, Christmas is still Good News. (Lk 2:10-11)

## **Appointment of Session Clerk**

After the November Kirk Session, Elders were asked to submit to Jonathan Keefe, the names of those whom they thought could take on the role of Session Clerk when Derek Robertson stands down at the end of the year. The name that achieved the majority of nominations was Ranald McTaggart. Ranald accepted the invitation to become Session Clerk of BVP and this was unanimously endorsed by the session. It was agreed that Ranald would take the Oath, De Fideli at the start of the Kirk Session meeting of 2nd February 2021.

## **From the Editor**

Earlier this year, I realised I had been editing the Herald for a decade. Back in early 2010, I volunteered to take over as editor from our minister Campbell when he became seriously ill. I have thoroughly enjoyed the job, thanks largely to your willing contributions and an uncomplaining readership. However ten years with one editor is enough and the Herald would benefit from a change, so I intimated that I wished to step down. I agreed to stay on to produce lockdown editions of the Herald with the help of Campbell Joss and Derek Robertson. Now the March 2021 edition will be my last. Thank you again for your support over the years and best wishes to my successor.

*John Goddard*

## **Roll Keeper and Pastoral Care Co-ordinator**

Andy Coghill informed the December Kirk Session of his intention to resign as Roll Keeper/Pastoral Care Co-ordinator as from 31st December 2020. Andy was thanked in his absence for the dedicated and meticulous way that he carried out his duties, and for his faithfulness to the congregation of BVP.

## **Compassion**

I have received another letter from six year old Martha in Uganda's worker, this time dated October. Thankfully this is to let us know that Martha and her family are well. Martha enjoys reading books, singing and dancing as well as playing hide and seek and long jump with her siblings. She likes to sing and praise in the Sunday school choir. Martha asks that we pray for her and her family to have divine protection and good health.

I am very grateful that a number of people have expressed a desire to contribute to the funds needed to support Dinar, Martha and Jose throughout next year. As you will be aware, we have been unable to raise funds in the ways we normally would, however it is possible to contribute either by cheque or direct bank transfer. If you wish to do so, please contact Derek, Campbell Joss or myself and we can let you know the bank account details. The Congregational Board and Kirk Session fully support this.

Once again, my heartfelt thanks to everyone for your continued support. Your commitment to the children and their families has a hugely positive impact on all their lives.

*Joan Canavan*

## **Weekly Offering Envelopes for 2021**

Weekly offering envelopes will be distributed during December to those of you who had a set of envelopes during 2020.

However, if you are now making your offerings in the form of payments from your bank account directly to Balshagray Victoria Park, then I shall assume that you will not require envelopes.

If by the end of December you have not been given envelopes which you expect to receive then please contact either your elder or myself.

Roberta Yule, FWO Convenor

## Prayer Points

### Serve someone today

*'Through love serve one another.'* Galatians 5:13 NKJV

Before He went to the cross, the Bible says that 'Jesus...took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him' (John 13:3-5 NIV). Then He said, 'I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you...Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them' (vv. 15-17 NIV). What a lesson! Love can't be manifested in isolation. It can't be done sitting alone in front of a TV or PC. To quote the singer Michael W. Smith: 'Love wasn't put in your heart to stay. Love isn't love till you give it away.' Note, Jesus 'showed them the full extent of his love' (see v. 1 NIV). How? By donning a servant's towel. And where can you do that? Anywhere! How about tomorrow at the office, the warehouse, or the job site? Your workplace can become a sacred place where God's presence blesses the mundane, day-to-day routine, because the love of God within you wears a servant's towel. 'Let me make those copies for you...I'll cover your calls while you run to school to bring your son his lunch box...you look like you're going through a rough time, and I'm a pretty good listener. I may not have all the answers, but I know Someone who does.' Paul bottom-lines it: 'Through love serve one another.' So go out of your way to serve someone today.

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*Christine Hay  
Prayer Secretary*

## Church Roll

There were no changes to the church roll last month

*Andy Coghill, Rollkeeper*

## The Guild

Although the Guild is not meeting just now, we are still supporting 3 of the 6 Guild Projects. I have just received a note of the amounts raised nationally from when we started donating to them in 2018 until October 2020:

**CrossReach** (aiming to tackle the problems of loneliness and isolation in Scotland, across all ages and segments of society) £77,259.31

**Malawi Fruits** (supporting young farmers in Malawi; the aim is to lift them out of poverty, to help through irrigation and crop processing, and to ensure the young people are not exploited in any way) £66,019.25

**The Free to Live Trust** (In 2014 the Trust built a home for abandoned street children from the red-light district of the city of Pune in India, and a rehabilitation centre for rescued victims of the sex industry. The partnership helps by rescuing children and some of the trafficked women.) £76,394.97

Please remember these projects in your prayers!

The Guild wishes you all a peaceful and blessed Christmas, and sends best wishes for the New Year.

*Christine Hay  
Guild Secretary*

Thanks to all who provided material for this Christmas issue.

Please send items for the February issue by

**Sunday 24th January**

to

[edbvpherald@gmail.com](mailto:edbvpherald@gmail.com)

## **Worship Services at BVP - December**

*Subject to changes due to any further restrictions imposed by the Scottish government. Please see the September (Lockdown 3) edition of the Herald for the Covid Security measures in place. Currently the maximum number permitted at Church Services is 20. **Places at the Christmas Eve Watchnight Service must be booked in advance by Sunday 20th December. Please 'phone Derek Robertson (0141 954 4343) to book.***

*Sunday 6th December*

11.00am Morning Service

Preacher Rev. Derek Peat

*Sunday 13th December*

11.00 am Service of Holy Communion

Preacher Rev. Derek Peat

*Sunday 20th December*

11.00am Morning Service

Preacher Rev. Derek Peat

*Thursday 24th December*

*Note: There is no 7.00pm Family Service*

11.30 pm Christmas Eve Watchnight Service  
led by Rev. Derek Peat

***Dependent on an increase in permitted numbers.  
See page 6 for conditions and booking details.***

*Friday 25th December*

*There is no Christmas Day Service this year*

*Sunday 27th December*

11.00 am Informal Service

led by Rev. Derek Peat