



# Wick St Fergus Church of Scotland



*December 2017*

Hello Caithness and welcome to the last newsletter of the year. Christmas is coming and we are all getting very excited about it. At least some of us are. I love Christmas but some of the build up I could do without. As something of a traditionalist about these things, Christmas for me begins with Advent Sunday, not with the beginning of the Christmas advertising campaigns in September. Of course, I exaggerate, but not by much. And some of us, understandably, become cynical about this time of year.

You know that you are getting close to Christmas when you hear professionally religious folks like me banging on about the real meaning of Christmas and of how we need to recapture it. We hear people complaining about how commercial it has all become. Then there are those who talk about putting Christ back into Christmas and who moan about people who say things like, "Happy Holidays" or "Happy Xmas." The problem with that is that the Jesus to whom they pledge a suspect kind of allegiance with is someone they don't seem to worry about for the rest of the year. That's because Jesus is a strange kind of chiel.

I like the way that one of my favourite songwriters, Bruce Cockburn, puts it in one of his songs, "Cry of A Tiny Babe." In the song he writes: There are others who know about this miracle birth, the humblest of people catch a glimpse of their worth, for it isn't to the palace that the Christ-child comes but to shepherds and street people, hookers and bums." That helps to centre things for us, to bring it all into sharp relief. For example, using Xmas instead of Christmas predates using the expression "Christmas." It isn't an X at the beginning of Xmas. What we think of as an X is actually the Greek letter "Chi." It is the first letter in the Greek name for Christ, "Christos." Saying Happy Christmas and Happy Xmas is therefore saying the same thing so stop moaning about it.

Also, it doesn't say anything less about Christ when one says "Happy Holidays." This comes from the good old US of A where the holiday season begins with Thanksgiving in November and you have a whole bundle of holidays coming together at roughly the same time. What is more demeaning to the name of Christ is when people who claim to speak in his name moan about those who express their Christmas joy in a way different from them. The moaners are the kind of people who take the budgie's bell from its cage on the Sabbath in case it enjoys itself. To go back to Bruce Cockburn for a moment, at Christmas we remember a baby born in a stable (or a barn or a cave or a lean-to, it really doesn't matter) who has doors of welcome closed to him and his parents, whose birth was announced to those considered unworthy and who all through his life defied those who saw religion as something to be endured rather than enjoyed. His friends were not primarily the great and the good but rather the lonely, the rejected, the ritually impure, the cheat, the terrorist (Simon the Zealot who became one of his disciples), the sick, the imprisoned, the homeless, the racially impure (according to the racists), those who stood on the fringes of society and polite company because they were different. In other words, as Bruce Cockburn so eloquently put it, "shepherds and street people, hookers and bums."

His first worshippers were astrologers from Babylon away to the East and those who should have protected him (King Herod et al...) instead sent out death squads to kill all male children under the age of two. And so, I for one, say all of these expressions: Merry Christmas, Happy Xmas, Happy Holidays to everyone, whoever you are, whether you are a Christian, an atheist, an agnostic, a Jew, a Muslim, an addict, an alcoholic, someone living

with HIV/AIDS, my LGBT friends, my friends whose skin and ways are different from mine.

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My prayer for you is that the peace of the one who came at the first Christmas would become yours this year. May this Christmas bring you healing of a broken heart, comfort if things have been tough, resolution of wrongs done to you and a life free from fear. At Wick St Fergus we are an affirming people where all are welcome and in the name of the baby born at Bethlehem we welcome you all and none will be sent away. Come and join with us at one of our services this Christmas. You know where we are.

*Revd*

*John Nugent BD(Honours)*

## Church Register

**DEATHS:** *We are sorry to report the passing of the following people:*

26<sup>th</sup> November - Christina "Christine" Anne Gemmell (nee Finlayson), beloved Mum to Christine, Alexander and Brian and loving Grandmother to Shawn and Joshua.

## Flowers for Sunday



DATE	KINDLY DONATED BY	ARRANGER
3 <sup>rd</sup> Dec	The family, in memory of Elsa MacDonald	Mrs Harper
10 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Mrs Janet MacDonald,	Mrs Harper
17 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Mrs Pamela McAdie,	
24 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Mrs Gunn, Netherby, Northcote St,	Mrs Anderson
31 <sup>st</sup> Dec		

*If you would like to fill an empty date on the rota please contact Mrs Harper on 602612*  
**THE LARGE HALL IS NOW IN USE EVERY SATURDAY UNTIL 11.30 AND FLOWERS CANNOT BE ARRANGED THEN**

## Church Duty Rota

Date	BUS	STAIRS	DOOR	DOOR	USHER
3 <sup>rd</sup> Dec	I Banks	M Duffy	H Gray	R Mappin	J Cormack
10 <sup>th</sup> Dec	J Mclennan	A Duffy	J Coghill	J Houston	E Henderson

17 <sup>th</sup> Dec	B Campbell	G Macdonald	J Mackay	M Foubister	M Thomson
24 <sup>th</sup> Dec	W Robertson	G Ramsay	*****	G Watt	A Sinclair
31 <sup>st</sup> Dec	M Duffy	R Mappin	J Cormack	I Banks	H Gray

If you are unable to attend on your duty day please arrange a swap. Dates with \*\* require cover. Please assist if you are in attendance on the day. With thanks, The Minister

## Lost in translation

If you are travelling in the near future, keep an eye out for these delightful translations which did not quite make it correctly to English.....

*Danish Airline* - "we take your bags and send them in all directions."

*Heathrow* - "No electric people carrying vehicles past this point."

*Japanese Taxi* - "Safety first: please put on your seatbelt. Prepare for accident."

*Kenyan Maternity Ward* - "No children allowed."

*Beijing shop* - "Haircuts half price today. Only one per customer."



## Sermon information from the minister

Date	Reading	Reading	Theme	Church Calender
3 <sup>rd</sup> Dec	TBC	TBC	Advent Celebration	1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent
10 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Service taken by Mrs. Maureen O'Neill			2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent
17 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Psalms 126	1 Thessalonians 5:16-24	Watching and testing	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent
24 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Psalms 89:1-8	Luke 1:26-38	"Impossible" is just a word	Christmas Eve
31 <sup>st</sup> Dec	Service taken by Mrs. Maureen O'Neill			1 <sup>st</sup> after Christmas

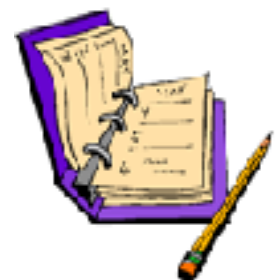
24 <sup>th</sup> December 11:30	Revd John Nugent	Christmas Eve
24 <sup>th</sup> December 18:30	Mrs. Maureen O'Neill	Christmas Eve
24 <sup>th</sup> December 23:30	Revd John Nugent	Watchnight Service
31 <sup>st</sup> December 11:30	Mrs. Maureen O'Neill	Hogmanay
7 <sup>th</sup> January 2018 11:30	Mrs Maureen O'Neill	1 <sup>st</sup> Service of the year

## Diary for Festive Services



### Guild Rally

All roads led to the Church Hall on Saturday afternoon of 18th November for the Caithness Presbyterian Council Guild Week Rally, where a warm hall welcomed a good gathering of members from all over the County. Welcomed by Janet McDonald, the company enjoyed an afternoon of hymn singing, led by Ruth Ferguson on the piano. Poems were read by Lottie Shearer, Isabel Farquhar and Christine Murray, who are all Council committee members. Guild members from the church choir sang "A New Commandment" and



two St Fergus Guild thespians, Maureen Robertson and Kathlyn Harper very ably performed a short drama illustrating the current Guild theme "Go in Love."

This was followed by the presentation of the women's and children's pants donated to the *Smalls for All* charity. Janet, who is also Project Co-ordinator for the Caithness Guilds, was quite overwhelmed to announce that 2119 pairs of pants made up the large pile of filled bags and boxes brought to the front of the stage. The St. Fergus contribution towards this total was 658 pairs. On behalf of the charity she thanked everybody for their extreme generosity. Council secretary Christine Murray gave the vote of thanks and brought the meeting to a close with a prayer and benediction. This was followed by the obligatory cup of tea and biscuit and a time of fellowship, as friendships were renewed, and news exchanged. Very many thanks to all who helped before, during and after this very successful event. Five large boxes of pants were couriered to Livingston on their first step of the long journey to Africa. Who would believe they have a combined weight of 61.45 kgs?

## Piping for a homeless man

As a bagpiper, I play many events, and recently, I was asked by a funeral director to play at a graveside service for a homeless man. He had no family or friends, so the service was to be at a pauper's cemetery in the country, I got lost, and being a typical man, I didn't stop to ask directions.

I finally arrived an hour late and saw the funeral guy had evidently gone and the hearse was nowhere in sight. There were only the diggers and crew left and they were sitting in the shade having their lunch.

I felt so bad and apologised to the men for being late. I went to the side of the grave. I didn't know what else to do, so I started to play.

The workers put down their lunches and began to gather around. I played my heart out for this man, with no family and friends. As I played amazing Grace, the workers began to weep. When I finished I packed up my bagpipes and started for my car. Though my head was hung low, my heart was full.

As I opened the car door one of the workers said to me, "I've never seen nothing like that before Sir, and I've been putting in septic tanks for over twenty years."

Apparently, I'm still lost.....

From everyone in Wick St Fergus Church, the newsletter team, our elders, committees and of course the Minister, we would like to wish you all, a very merry Christmas.

*Merry Christmas*

**Due to Christmas holidays, as usual, the January newsletter will be one side of paper and all weddings/funerals/information will be carried forward to February's issue. Thank you for your cooperation with this.**

**Website:** Find us at [www.wickstferguschurch.org.uk](http://www.wickstferguschurch.org.uk) or find us on facebook  
*Please can all items for February's newsletter be with Michelle by Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> January - Thank you*

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Scottish Charity

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