



Muckairn Parish Church

Christmas  
2024

Seasons  
Greetings  
From  
Muckairn

## From the Editor...

Hello and welcome....

We've had a great time reading and researching seasonal material to include in our Christmas Magazine. A big thank you to everyone who has contributed to this edition and given generously to the Christmas Wishes pages and also a big thank you TO YOU for purchasing a copy as all the proceeds from the sales are going to Christian Aid.

In these uncertain and changeable times, traditions seem all the more important. They give us strong foundations on which to live our lives and help us to keep connected with a sense of where we came from and why we are here. They enable us to share experiences, like foods, music, singing, tales, anecdotes and activities that link us to our past and to each other.

Hanging onto the best of our customs provides a sense of continuity. It keeps us connected to our ancestors and to our cultural heritage. These long-held traditions remind us that no matter how far apart we are, we have family, friends and neighbours. No two families are exactly alike so sharing our Christmas traditions with each-other is especially joyful.

While putting this magazine together, we have kept you in the front of our minds and hearts, and whatever traditions you follow and whoever you share them with this Christmastime, we send you happy and hope filled Christmas wishes.

Katherine Blyth



Christmas Focus  
by I A Blyth

Don't let us miss you this Christmas,  
As we wrap ourselves up in the fun and the noise.  
Don't let us miss you this Christmas,  
As we ribbon our minds with the gifts and the toys.  
Don't let us miss you this Christmas,  
As we fill up our thoughts on the meals to prepare,  
Don't let us miss you this Christmas,  
As we welcome our guests but forget you are there.

Instead, may we focus this Christmas  
On the loving, compassionate gift of your Son.  
Instead, may we focus this Christmas  
On the peace and the joy that you bring everyone.  
Instead, may we focus this Christmas  
For having you with us for all of our days.  
Instead, may we focus this Christmas  
On giving YOU thanks and singing YOUR praise.



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is wonderful to be with you, in this my last year of training to become an Ordained Local Minister. This has been a long journey for me, but the joy I have known in accepting God's prompting is beyond words, but it is also challenging, so bear with me as I share some thoughts with you.

Advent is upon us, Christmas is coming. Excited, or are you worried about coping, or are you wondering? Christmas means different things to different people. It can be a difficult time for many, even Christians can struggle. For an aunt, she always chooses to spend it alone, 25<sup>th</sup> December is her husband's birthday, but he died in 2012 and she misses him all the time. Yes, she carries on, and still enjoys her life, but on days like birthdays and anniversaries she just likes to be on her own to savour her memories. Be sure to remember, not everyone will be celebrating this Christmas. Me, I'm a completely over the top person about Christmas, I love the lights and decorations. I love to write cards and remember why I'm still sending a card to someone I haven't seen all year, there's always a happy memory that keeps me writing. Most of all I love the story of the angel visiting Mary. We only find it in Luke's gospel, but for me it highlights two important aspects of Christian faith. The first is Mystery. In our modern age of asking 'Google' the answer to almost any question, when science can explain so much, some might find it hard to live with Mystery, but faith is believing something which cannot be proved. It is Mystery. An angel spoke to Mary, 'Greetings, you who are highly favoured!'. Mary 'pondered' what this meant, I love the idea of 'pondering'. I hope you will have time to 'ponder' this Advent season. The angel goes on to say Mary will give birth to a son, and much more. Without even raising the question of how she conceived, the angel tells her she will have a son. Even now, with ultrasound scans, sometimes the professionals get it wrong, but the Angel knew and Mary accepted, she would have a son. That is a Mystery. The second is Trust. I envy Mary her absolute trust. 'I am the Lord's servant, may your word to me be fulfilled'.

How often have you been prompted by God, challenged by God, have you responded immediately with a similar answer, 'I am the Lord's servant'? Sadly, I'm inclined to argue with God, try to convince him he's made a mistake, but it's exhausting. Mary is an amazing example and sometimes we need to look to her and realise, Trust God.

It is easy to get caught up in all that is not right, in our world, in our country, in our town or village, in our church and it is easy to try to bury those concerns by saying God has a plan... God does have a plan and it involves you, it involves us.

So what can we do? What part can we play in God's plan? There are so many BIG problems, but each day we can find one thing to do that is a small act of love and kindness. Smile at a stranger, smile at someone you don't like. Speak to a neighbour, phone someone you haven't been in touch with for too long. There are many simple things we can do.

As we look towards Advent and Christmas, with joy, sadness or confusion, accept the Mystery of Faith and act, trusting in God. Each day tell God, and mean it, 'I am the Lord's servant, may your word to me be fulfilled'.

And so may you discover the love and wonder of Christ in your life each day.

Yours in Christ, Aileen Binner



CHRISTMAS: 1924.

“Peace upon earth!” was said. We sing it  
And pay a million priests to bring it.  
After two thousand years of mass  
We’ve got as far as poison-gas.

Thomas Hardy.

CHRISTMAS: 2024.

Hardy, if you were still around,  
I think you’d find familiar ground.  
It’s now the age of nuclear fission.  
To kill and destroy is still some’s mission.

However, this Christmas I also have an altogether  
merrier picture in my minds eye, of a fragrantly  
steaming bowl of spiced ale or mulled wine and of  
the jovial, smiling faces likely to be round it, a  
glimpse of the kinder, more companionable side to  
our nature.

Set the steaming bowl before us.  
“Waes hael!” cry in merry chorus.  
Share the fragrant festive moment:  
Togetherness a key component.

“Waes hael to you all!”

Michael Kidd.



*This poem is attributed to several different authors on the internet with several different versions. The following is my own, personal favourite. Editor*

I asked God to take my habit away,  
God said "No.  
It is not for me to take away, but for you to give it up."

I asked God to grant me patience,  
God said "No.  
Patience is a by product of tribulations , it isn't granted it is earned."

I asked God to give me happiness,  
God said "No.  
I give you blessings, happiness is up to you."

I asked God to spare me pain,  
God said "No.  
You must grow on your own, but I will prune you, to make you fruitful."

I asked God for all things that I might enjoy in life,  
God said "No.  
I will give you life so you may enjoy all things."

Then I asked God to help me love others as much as He loves me,  
God said,  
"Finally, you get the idea."



A few everyday words & phrases with religious origins...

### **By the skin of my teeth**

The Book of Job (19:20) in which God saves Job from Satan  
*I am nothing but skin and bones; I have escaped only by the skin of my teeth*

### **Don't put words in my mouth**

Exodus chapter 4 verse 15 - King James Bible. Moses is asked to put words in his elder brother Aaron's mouth.  
*And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do.*

### **Scapegoat**

Leviticus Chapter 16 verse 8  
*Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the Lord and the other lot for the scapegoat. <sup>9</sup> And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the Lord's lot fell, and offer it as a sin offering. <sup>10</sup> But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make atonement upon it, and to let it go as the scapegoat into the wilderness.*

### **A drop in the bucket**

Isaiah Chapter 40 verse 15  
*Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold, He taketh up the isles as a very little thing.*

### **Noon**

From the latin word 'nona' which means nine. In Liturgy of the hours, the prayers said at 3pm (or the 9th hour of the day after sun rise at 6.00am) were called 'None'. Over time those prayers were moved to being said at 12pm, and the name came with them.

### **Goodbye**

Some of the variants since the 1400 to the present day God be with thee, God be with you, God buy ye, Godbuy, Goodby, Goodbye!

### **Christmas Prayer for Peace**

Prince of Peace, on this holy night, we lift our prayers for peace in our hearts, in our homes, and in the world. May the message of Christmas be a beacon of hope, guiding us to strive for harmony and understanding with one another. Let your peace reign as we seek to live in the light of your love.  
Amen.

### **A Child's Christmas Morning Prayer**

Dear God, On this happy Christmas morning, we want to say thank you for all the love and joy in our hearts. We're so excited about the presents, but we know that the best gift of all is Jesus, your Son. Thank you for sending Him to be with us.

Help us to be kind and share with others today, just like Jesus taught us. Bless our family and friends as we celebrate together. May our day be filled with laughter and happiness.  
We love you, God. Merry Christmas! In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

### **Christmas Prayer**

Dear Lord,  
Thank you for this Christmas day and for this time shared by all gathered here. We remain eternally grateful for the gift of Jesus into our world and we pray that our eyes be opened to the ways in which he continues to be active in our lives, blessing us each and every day. Amen.



## Why is Christmas on the 25th December?

The exact date Jesus was born is not known. No date is given in the Bible. The early Christians certainly had many discussions and arguments about it and historians looking back at the evidence are certain that Jesus was not born on 25th December of the year 0.



The reasons behind this include:

1. The timing of the Roman Census. The Roman census was held every 14 years which means the journey to Bethlehem was probably in AD 6 or in 8 BC.
2. The astronomical considerations concerning the presence of a 'bright star' point to 6 BC as the favourite.
3. The season was more likely to be in the Autumn. In an agricultural community it would not have made sense to have workers attend a population check when they were busy on the land, nor would it be sensible to make people travel in winter.
4. Shepherds would be unlikely to be out 'watching their flocks by night' in the height of the colder, rainy season in the region.

So why December 25th?

Some sources report that Theophilus of Antioch (circa 171-183) was the first to identify December 25th as the birth date of Christ.

Others say that Hippolytus (circa 170-236) was the first to claim that Jesus was born on December 25th.

Ultimately, December 25th was chosen, perhaps as early as A.D. 273.

The first 'official' recorded date of Christmas being celebrated on December 25th was in 336AD, during the time of the first Christian Roman Emperor, Constantine.

Later, in the middle of the 4th Century, Pope Julius I, having carried out a detailed investigation into the date of Jesus' birth, concluded that it would always be on 25th December.

One possible reason for selecting 25th December, was that the early church historian, Sextus Julius Africanus (c160-c240), said the Annunciation took place on 25th March which is 9 months prior to the 25th December.

Another possible reason that helped the early Church choose December 25th was Hanukkah. This Jewish festival of lights starts on the eve of the Kislev 25 (the month in the Jewish calendar that occurs at about the same time as December).

It was also believed by some that 25th December was chosen to coincide with other Roman and Pagan Festivals. Saturnalia took place between December 17th and 23rd and honoured the Roman god Saturn and in Rome the Winter Solstice took place around December 24th/25th.

In 274 the Roman emperor Aurelian, created 'Dies Natalis Solis Invicti' (meaning 'birthday of the unconquered sun') also called 'Sol Invictus' which was believed to be held on December 25th.

However, in 3rd Century AD, the Christian author Hippolytus of Rome, wrote that Jesus was born on December 25th and Saturnalia and the feast of Sol were not celebrated on the same day in early Roman history. So Hippolytus could not have chosen the date to align with pagan sentiments.

The more I researched, the more contradictory some of the articles became. It's a fascinating subject. However, whatever the day, or date, or year, one thing will always remain...that Jesus was born to "save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1 verse 21) and this wondrous happening is a cause for great celebration.

Isabel Blyth



# Christmas Wishes

*Thank you to everyone who made a donation to send their Christmas wishes this year.*

**With Best Wishes for a pleasant Christmas and a Good and Peaceful New Year when it comes.  
Brian Wilkinson**

**Best wishes for a wonderful Christmas and a very Happy New Year.  
Kathy Whelan.**

**Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a New Year filled with peace, hope and love.  
Isabel & Duncan Blyth**

**Best wishes for Christmas and a happy New Year in 2025  
Deirdre MacFarlane**

**Merry Christmas, Happy New Year.  
Campbell and Florence**

**Best Wishes for a Happy and Healthy Christmas and New Year.  
David and Hilary Currie**



**Wishing you all a Happy Christmas and Healthy New Year. Thank you all for your continued support. Merry Christmas.  
John and Lorna MacIennan**

**With all good wishes for a Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.  
Margaret and Peter Harper**

**Seasons Greetings to all and Yappy Christmas to Penny and Fell.  
Andy Parker**

**Happiness and Health to all of us in 2025  
Alison Pringle**

**Mary Scott and family wish everyone a happy and blessed Christmas and a peaceful year in 2025**

**Wishing everyone a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.  
Ann Sutherland and Family**

**Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.  
Rosemary Carswell**





Wishing you all a Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New year.  
Michael G. Kidd

Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas and a really good New Year.  
Ann and Lawrence

Wishing everyone a happy and healthy Christmas.  
Jo and MaIain

May your Advent and Christmas celebrations bring you joy in our Lord.  
Tom and Jan Telfer

Wishing everyone a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful new year.  
Donald and Janice Harrison

Our best wishes for a Happy Christmas and a peaceful and healthy new year.  
June and Colin Boden

Wishing everyone a blessed and Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year. With warmest wishes,  
Roderick and Sue Campbell



A Very happy Christmas to all  
Andrew and Lucy Campbell - Gray

Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and health and happiness for 2025.  
Mary and Freddie Nicolson

I would like to wish all of my friends a very Happy Christmas and a wonderful New Year 2025.  
Christine Allen



How many words can you make from...

**CHRISTINGLE**



(20 - Good, 30 - Excellent, 40 - Unbelievably brilliant!)







"Apparently there's no good or bad children anymore...only misunderstood!"

# Christmas Funnies...

Why does everyone love Frosty the snowman? .... He's Cool

What do snowmen call their offspring? ..... Chill-dren!

What do reindeer say before they tell you a joke? .....

This ones gonna sleigh you!

Why did Santa Claus get a parking ticket on Christmas Eve? .....

He left his sleigh in a snow parking zone!

Why is it so cold at Christmas? .....

Because its Decembrrrrr!

Why do Poinsettias hate maths? .....

It gives them square roots!

Why aren't reindeer good dancers? .....

Because they have two left feet!

Santa couldn't afford his water bill so Rudolf sent him a 'get well soon' card!

Mrs Claus is writing a pantomime about broken bones She just needs a cast for it!



- The Four Stages of Life
- 1.You believe in Santa Claus
  - 2.You don't believe in Santa Claus
  - 3.You are Santa Claus
  - 4.You look like Santa Claus





## How well do you know Christmas?

1. In which year did Rudolf the red nose reindeer first appear?
2. Which iconic brand was responsible for Santa's red suit?
3. On a Christmas wreath what does the Holly represent?
4. What was Sir Henry Cole credited for first producing?
5. What is the first line of the poem, 'A visit from St Nicholas'?
6. In 1882 Edward Johnson invented the first electric what?
7. In many countries, Boxing Day commemorates the life of which Saint?
8. Name all of Santa's Reindeer?

9. St. Nicholas was Bishop of Myra, a small Roman town in which country?
10. Which Royal sent the first official Christmas Card?
11. Which popular Christmas item did the Druids consider to be an aphrodisiac?
12. HOH OHO is Santa's official postcode in which country?
13. Jingle Bells was originally released with what name?
14. Which song became the first Christmas No 1 and the first ever UK number one in 1952?
15. Candy Canes are shaped to represent what?
16. What Christmas treat became popular due to a Brothers Grimm story?
17. Which actor voiced six different roles in the film 'The Polar Express'?
18. In Home Alone 2 where was Kevin lost?
19. Which character said the following, "Spirit remove me from this place"?
20. What type of nuts do you get from the Castanea Sativa tree?

The Innkeeper of Bethlehem  
by Marian Swinger

'There's no room at the inn,' he told them.  
'We're full up, I am sorry to say.  
Inn's crammed with people. Can't help it.  
I'm having to turn folk away.'  
But there was something about the young woman  
and the innkeeper shouted out. 'Wait,  
I suppose you could sleep in the stable,  
there's nothing else left, and it's late.'  
He showed them both round to the stable  
and settled them down for the night,  
then he left, glancing up at the heavens  
where a star shone unnaturally bright,  
gilding his face with a splendour  
that no one on earth ever saw  
as he entered his inn, slightly dazzled,  
quietly closing the door.



Taynult Post Office: On behalf of everyone, we would like to thank Lorna in the Post Office for her help and co-operation in accepting and storing gifts and donations throughout the year and all the many other ways she has helped us.

Church Flowers: Sincere thanks to Mary and Rosemary for another year of beautiful floral arrangements in Church. The colours and displays always look so attractive and bring happiness to us every week. Please remember, if you can, to make a donation to Mary or Rosemary towards the cost of providing the flowers.

Church Teas and Coffees: Huge thanks to Christine and Kathy for providing us with such enjoyable refreshments every Sunday after the service. And thank you to all their helpers including Vanessa, Kathy, Heather and Jo. Please remember, if you can, to make a small donation each week towards purchasing these refreshments.

Tom & Jan have sent the following message:  
Thank you for the lovely gifts, love and blessings you gave us as we set off to return to the United States. The gift of \$650 was very thoughtful and extremely useful during the time of transition and we will enjoy looking at Eilidh Livingston's photograph of Cruachan in the sunshine often and the watercolour print of Muckairn Church. We will remember with joy our times in your wonderful community.



Special December Services  
at Muckairn Church, Taynult

Special Reflective Service - Sunday 1st Dec  
4.00pm

Carols by Candlelight - Sunday 8th Dec 4.00pm

Family Christingle Service - Sun 22nd Dec  
11.30am

Christmas Morning Service - Wed 25th Dec  
11.00am



Loving Jesus,  
You were born in a stable but worshipped by angles,  
Be with all who are lonely,  
and with all who feel distant from celebrations.  
Be for us a living hope that lightens  
their hearts.



CHRISTMAS QUIZ  
ANSWERS

1. 1939
2. Coca Cola
3. The crown of thorns
4. Christmas Cards
5. Twas the night before Christmas
6. Tree lights
7. St. Stephen
8. Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner, Blitzen, & Rudolph
9. Turkey
10. Queen Victoria
11. Mistletoe
12. Canada
13. One Horse Open Sleigh
14. Here in my Heart
15. A Shepherd's crook
16. Gingerbread House
17. Tom Hanks
18. New York
19. Ebenezer Scrooge
20. Chestnuts





Aileen Binner  
Ministries Coordinator  
[ABinner@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:ABinner@churchofscotland.org.uk)  
Tel: 07708820860

Interim Moderator - Alison Hay  
Tel: 01546 886213

Editor  
Katherine Blyth  
[katherine3un@btinternet.com](mailto:katherine3un@btinternet.com)