

FOCUS

Portsoy Church Magazine



John Gow our new minister

December 20—January 2021

Letter from the Locum



As I write this in mid-November, the two items dominating the news are Coronavirus and the ongoing rumblings over the US Presidential election. With the first in mind, Collins' Dictionary has made 'lockdown' its word of the year. It is a word we've all come to know as part of the variety of ways our lives have been restricted during much of 2020.

And of course for some there have been far wider implications than just such restrictions: illness and even death at the hands of the virus; mental health problems; job loss, or at least financial struggles. So, for these people, it will be a far from 'happy Christmas.'

Coming now to the US political scene, a phrase very much associated with President Trump is 'fake news-' his summary of how he views the news output of much of the US media.

And as we approach Christmas, there is often much which comes across as a bit fake: advertisers portraying the ideal family all together at Christmas and how all will be well, if only we can find that 'perfect' present. And, if amidst it all, we come across the original Christmas story....does that come across as a bit too good to be true as well? The Christmas card scene of Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus, surrounded by a variety of animals, seems equally as idealised as any of the other aspects of Christmas which I have already mentioned.

But if we dig below the surface the reality behind that scene was far from so ideal and may have more relevance for those afflicted by the virus than for those of us able to enjoy the Christmas season.

The manger scene was only reached after a long trip of about 100 miles for the heavily pregnant Mary....on a donkey; which woman would then like to have given birth in an animal shed, no matter how warm and safe? Then a year or two later the family had to flee abroad to

Egypt to escape persecution. And we have not even begun to consider Jesus' adult life...

constantly opposed by the powers that be because of his beliefs, culminating, of course, in the horrors of his crucifixion.

So maybe Jesus has got more to say to the parts of our society deeply affected by the coronavirus, than to those of us who have been spared the worst?

But what about us, if we are in that latter category. What can the Christmas story say to us? If we go back to the original Christmas story there were shepherds tending to their flocks on a hillside near Bethlehem where Jesus was born.

Despite their busy lives, they were curious enough about this baby Jesus to want to go and see...to discover more about him.

May that be our attitude this Christmas- curious enough about the 'real' Christmas story to want to find out more.

If so you will be welcome at any of our Christmas events in the Church Centre.

Happy Christmas when it comes,
and best wishes for 2021,

Steve Hay

To contact me ring 07926 773607 or just let your elder know.

Funerals

29 Sept Kathleen Simpson

22 Oct Bertha Cowie

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Hello!!! From John Gow

Things just have a way of happening at the right time, don't they? When I noticed the deadline for submissions for the December/January issue of Focus was 22nd November, the same day it would be confirmed to you all that I would be joining you as the minister for Portsoy Church, I knew it was the perfect opportunity to say hello and tell you a little about myself. I won't say too much just now though, as there's going to be plenty of time for you to get to know me, and much more importantly for me to get to know you!

I'm a "bairn" from Falkirk and I've been here all of my life, apart from a few years spent in Aberdeen and short periods of living in both Glasgow and Edinburgh. My two sisters and my brother both live nearby and it'll be a bit of a wrench to move away from them, although they've promised to visit regularly!

After school in Falkirk and university in Aberdeen I worked for a wee while in hotels and restaurants, but eventually found my way into the newspaper industry and started working for The Scotsman in Edinburgh where I think I did most things - I sold ads (not very well!), I worked in IT, admin and accounts, and I wrote a lot of commercial features too. But eventually I decided enough was enough and that there was something else I was meant to be doing, so about four-and-a-half years ago I left it all behind and started on the path that has led me to where I am now. I guess you could say I've come from news to pews - although you don't have pews in the Portsoy Church Centre, but you know what I mean!

I studied for my Theology degree at Highland Theological College in Dingwall, although I spent very little time in the Highlands as most of the lectures and lessons took place online.

Given that we've spent so much of our time in the past months on Zoom and in video calls, that experience certainly came in handy! Alongside my studies, I also served in various placements in and around the Falkirk and Stirling area, where I learned an enormous

amount about what it really means to lead and be part of a worshipping community.

So that's just a little about me but as I've said, there will be plenty of time to tell you more and for me to learn more about you. All in God's good time.

Thank you for accepting me, and thank Him for bringing me to you.

Blessings to you all.

John

Shoebox Appeal 2020

A big thank you from our contacts in Buckie to all who donated goods for this year's Shoebox Appeal. George Flett said they packed and sent 1,400 shoeboxes from Buckie this year, only slightly less than last year, as well as monetary donations. They felt this was a great achievement in this particularly difficult year. Thank you all for your generosity and compassion. Margaret Whewell.

Church General Finances: Covid-19

Our finances are being significantly affected by the closure of the Church Centre for other activities. A very big thank you to everyone who is donating to church funds. Your help is very much appreciated. If you are able to give a little more during these difficult times it would help the Church to get through to better times when our Centre can open again. Thank you also to those who have made arrangements for their regular donations to continue perhaps by changing to standing orders or by sending cheques or cash to Ishbel. It has been very helpful. Don't forget also by gift aiding your donation it is worth 25% more to the Church.

If you wish to change your method of giving or wish to gift aid your donation please contact Ishbel Mackinnon Tel: 01261 842545 or by email: ishbel.mackinnon@btinternet.com

Mrs Joan Morrison

I write this appreciation for Mrs Joan Morrison on behalf of the members of Portsoy Church for the unstinting work she has done over the years and continues to do on our behalf.

You see here a photo of Joan receiving gifts in recognition of her 18 years as a joint session clerk, duties she conducted efficiently and effectively at all times. She did think at the time it would be a three year stint.

Joan joined the Portsoy congregation in 1969 following her marriage to Ewen. During the subsequent years she has played a full part in the life of the church.

She was a member of the Young Women's group set up by Mrs Montgomery before promotion to the Church Woman's Guild in 1989 where she has held the posts of both secretary and treasurer on more than one occasion. In the Rev Lynn's tenure, she was part of the working group that fundraised for the renovation of the Institute Hall. She often tells the story of the raft race which was I guess one of her memorable ventures.

Over the years Joan was a member of the Congregational Board taking on the role of Clerk to the Board. Ordained as an Elder on 18 April, 1992, she has devoted time and energy to the role. As a civil servant by profession she took her organisational and administrative skills to her many roles including the Convenor for the Deeds of Covenant from 1996 - 2015 and the joint session clerk from 2002 - 2020. However, she has been seen sweeping the leaves on the church steps, planting the flower pots, copying the Church Family News and Focus magazine and sorting the Christmas card delivery. The

list is endless and Joan wasn't afraid to put her hand to any task.

Although Joan has demitted the office of Session Clerk we are very pleased she will continue with many of the other tasks.

Thank you, Joan.
Anne McArthur



Portsoy Church Guild

There has been a wonderful response to the idea of a knitted blanket, and I have received enough beautiful knitted squares that we can make not one, but TWO single bed size blankets. The first is nearing completion, and I hoped to have a photo of it in this edition of Focus, but space is limited this time, so it will be in the February/March issue. Maybe by then, both will be completed.

I have received the materials for the 2021 World Day of Prayer service, and we hope to hold it in the Church Centre, where social distancing is possible. So, put the first Friday in March in your diaries! More news on this soon.



Prayer Focus

“But what about you?” Jesus asked. “Who do you say I am?”

Matthew 16:15

Well before the calendar flips to December, Christmas cheer begins in our towns. Around my neighbourhood, trees and shrubs become draped in coloured lights, which can be breathtaking at night time. It's difficult to turn anywhere without seeing evidence of Christmas spirit. Some people love these lavish displays. Others take a more unbelieving view. A lady was heard to say that she, and her family, hasn't done anything for Christmas for years. It is sad that she should feel like that and that the real meaning of Christmas for her, and many more, means nothing. When we observe Christmas, we each need to consider what the celebration means to us.

A little more than thirty years after His birth, Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”. They gave various answers such as John the Baptist, Elijah, or maybe another prophet. Then Jesus said, “Who do you say I am?”. Peter replied, “You are the Messiah the Son of God”.

Today, 2000 years later, millions of people have no thought of Jesus. Although they participate enthusiastically in the festivities of the Christmas season, they keep Him out of their lives. As we meet with them, we can help them consider the meaning of the heart warming story about the baby born in a stable and how God our Creator came to be among us.

What child is this, who, laid to rest
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?

Thank You, Father, for this loved and familiar season: for carols, for giving and receiving, for a sense of celebration everywhere. Lord, may it be possible in our present situation, to be able to enjoy reunions with families and friends. We ask that the familiarity of Christmas may not smother the truth that we celebrate together. Please open the hearts and minds of those who do not know You or the true message of Christmas.

Amen

Thank You

I would like to thank the Kirk Session for the beautiful flowers, very generous voucher for Christies and the lovely book "God in the Garden" which I received on stepping down as Joint Session Clerk. The voucher and the book will be put to good use in the spring.

Joan Morrison

Christmas Card Delivery Service

Unfortunately with the current restrictions and the risks from COVID-19 we regret that we will not be able to offer our usual charity Christmas Card delivery service for Portsoy. We hope to resume normal service next year.

FOCUS DEADLINE

The next edition of Focus will cover February-March 2021. Please let Johanna Sturrock have articles and any photographs for inclusion no later than Sunday 17th January. unicornathome@gmail.com.

Commemorative Plate

At Doors Open in September 2019, a visitor was admiring the church silver on display and suggested there should be a silver item to commemorate the renovation of Portsoy Church Centre.

Anne McArthur commissioned a silver plate to be used at communion from Vanilla Inc., the Banff Silversmith.

Megan Falconer, the silversmith, worked on the design, visiting a master silversmith in Shetland. The upper side is brushed silver with a beaten edge while the underside is polished silver. The engraving depicts the Cross, the name Portsoy Church Centre and the date, 2019. Around the edge of the plate are the names of the Kirk Session who took charge of the renovation following the departure of the Rev. Nicoll and whose faith, motivation, energy and enthusiasm drove the project to completion.

Thanks be to God.
Dr Anne McArthur

Covesea and Guildry Houses

The Pastoral Care Group would like to say a big **thank you!!** for the awesome response at the Harvest Thanksgiving service. In total, 16 bags of tinned and dry goods were delivered to Covesea and Guildry Houses in Elgin. See the photos opposite.

A reminder also that our last delivery for the year to Sacro Moray Supported Accommodation Service, is Christmas week. There is a hamper available at our Sunday Services if you wish to donate any Christmas food treats or gifts.

Thank you for your continued support

The Pastoral Care Team

Information on Sunday Worship

The Church is now open for worship every Sunday morning at 10.30am and we would be delighted if you can join us. We have been open for several weeks now and feel confident that it is safe to attend. **But, it is essential to sanitise your hands before entry, wear a mask, maintain two metre physical distancing and provide contact details.** We cannot sing, but we do play videos of the hymns. Raymond also kindly plays the organ before and after the service. Unfortunately we still cannot offer teas and coffees after the service and we need to socialise outside after the service, rather than within the Sanctuary.

The general arrangements to keep you safe are as follows:

- ◆ You must wear a mask while in the building unless you are exempt from doing so. We have spare masks if needed.
- ◆ You must maintain the appropriate physical distancing and good hand hygiene while you are in the building.
- ◆ As entrance area is small, please be patient to allow for physical distancing of 2 metres. You may need to queue outside until you can safely enter.
- ◆ We will ask if you are well and if you have any Covid-19 symptoms. If you are unwell, especially with any symptoms of Covid-19, please **do not** attend Church.
- ◆ Chairs are placed to allow physical distancing. Please do not move the chairs. If you are with someone from your own household please use the chairs which are in pairs.
- ◆ Please try to minimise points you touch in the building. Ideally only touch the chair you are sitting on.
- ◆ The spacing of chairs limits the size of our congregation to a safe maximum of 37. This means we may have to limit attendance. So far we have not been near that number.

- ◆ Sanitising gel dispensers are provided at the entrance and within the sanctuary. Please use these when you come into the building and before you take your seat.
- ◆ You must not sing along with the videos, although the words will be displayed. Very difficult, but please try to comply.
- ◆ If you need to use the toilet, you can. But, there is a limit of 1 person in each toilet. Please respect this rule and try to maintain physical distancing while using the facilities.
- ◆ If you become unwell during the service please immediately alert one of the elders on duty.
- ◆ If you are in the highly vulnerable category, please consider carefully if you should stay at home. The services are videoed and we post the recordings on the website and produce CDs/DVDs so you can enjoy the services from your own home. The Church of Scotland has produced an assessment tool which can be found on the Church of Scotland website* We recommend you use it to help you decide if you should attend. We can provide a printed copy if you prefer. Please contact Steve if you would like this.
- ◆ We **must** collect contact details for all attending the service., every week. Please be patient and provide the information when asked even if you have provided it many times before.

*https://churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/68499/Appendix-4-Assessment-Tool-for-individual-and-group-health-risks.pdf





Please contact Olwen Christie (Pastoral Care Convener) on 01261 843 680 if you know of anyone who is ill at home or in hospital (especially Dr Gray's in Elgin as we are not notified).

Community Diary:

A diary of local events has been placed in the Portsoy Ice Cream Shop for use by everyone. This will enable event organisers to check that the date and time of their event will not clash with another already planned.

Please pass this on to any other local groups. To work effectively everyone will need to check the diary and ensure their own event is entered in it.

A Christian book lending library is available in the Session House at Portsoy Church.

If you see something you fancy reading, just put your name in the register, borrow the book and sign it back in when you're finished.



PRAYER CIRCLE

Name:
(Not necessary)

Please pray for:
.....
.....

Please place completed slip in box at church door or hand to the minister or Edith Stuart.

Directory

- Interim Moderator** Rev Kevin Gruer
Tel: 01888 563850
E-mail: kgruer@churchofscotland.org.uk
- Session Clerk** Mrs Yvonne McKay, Bayview, Sandend.
Tel: 07592 395 581
E-mail: Yvonne@therealmckay.co.uk
- Treasurer** Mrs Ishbel Mackinnon, 17 Durn Road, Portsoy.
Tel: 01261 842545 or 07969 697362
E-mail: ishbel.mackinnon@btinternet.com
- Gift Aid Convener** Mr Ian Whewell, Eynhallow, 14 South High
Street, Portsoy. Tel:01261 843125
E-mail: ian.whewell@btinternet.com
- Church Website** Mr Ian Whewell - as above
- Church Centre Convener** Mr Ian Whewell - as above
(For bookings)
- Centre Caretaker** Mrs Sarah Willis, 40, Gordon Crescent,
Portsoy
Tel:01261 843928 or 07756535731
E-mail: sarahsfamily@btinternet.com
- Focus** Mrs Johanna Sturrock
21 Hill Street, Portsoy. Tel: 01261 843009
E-mail: unicornathome@gmail.com

DIRECTORY (CONTINUED)

Pastoral Care Group Convener	Olwen Christie	01261 843680
Outreach Group Convener	Paul Williams	01261 842338
Finance & Property Group Convener	Ian Whewell	01261 843125
Social Group Convener	Helen D'Arcy	01261 842340
Administration Group Convener	Anne McArthur	01261 842474

Service Times

Every Sunday at 10.30am unless otherwise
intimated

Special Services:

**Sunday 20th December: Service of readings and
carols**

**Christmas Eve at 6.30pm: Candlelit Family
Service (tel: 01261 843125 to book seats)**

**Christmas Day at 10.30am: Video service
available on the Church website**

Please join us for all are welcome

Website—<http://www.portsoychurch.org>

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Scottish Charity No: SC 000522