



St Andrew's and St George's West Christmas 2020 mini mag



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Our Blue Christmas service will aim to offer a gentle, reflective time for anyone carrying pain or loss of any kind this festive season. With a focus on God’s loving and reassuring presence whatever our personal situation, the service will consist of readings, prayers, candle-lighting, calming music and time for reflection.



Perhaps this service is for you or someone you may know? If so, please come along; bring a hand in need of holding or a heart in need of care. For more information about the service, please visit www.stagw.org.uk/event/blue-christmas/

No one is “waste” in God’s economy

A letter from Rosie

It was on the first Sunday of Advent that I read that the carved Edinburgh nativity scene, a feature of Christmas in Edinburgh city centre for nearly 20 years, was once again *in situ* for the season. A little piece of ‘normal’ in a year that has been anything but. The Facebook post said it had been installed beside the Scott Monument so, within the hour, I went down to see for myself. As I approached the end of South St David Street, I caught a glimpse of the manger scene across Princes Street. I say ‘glimpse’ because the first thing I noticed was that mother and child were obscured by two large rubbish bins, one reading ‘Any old rubbish here’. My initial thought was surprise that such a location had been chosen, and by the time I crossed the road this response had already escalated to mild indignation. Perhaps no thought *whatsoever* had been put into the location of this hand-crafted depiction of the birth of Jesus!



As I stood beside the railings, I found myself gratified that other passers-by found the setting disconcerting, at best. ‘That’s a ridiculous place to put it’ one man remarked. I agreed with him. We were a small pocket of solidarity, standing up for the dignity of the holy family. Reinforcement of the sentiment came in the Edinburgh news the next day. *Edinburgh Live* reported that the Council had agreed to move the nativity scene after complaints to the chief executive. One local was reported as saying that even though they weren’t religious it seemed a silly place to put it.

I should have been pleased but that is when the niggles set in. Was it really such a silly place? Didn't Jesus spend most of his time alongside those who felt worthless and that they had been 'thrown away' by society? If anything, he had an issue with the religious and political elites of the day who seemed to be determined to maintain the *status quo*. Placing the nativity scene by rubbish bins is, inadvertently, a potent reminder that God took the risk of entering the mess and mayhem of human existence to dignify it and show a different way. Placing the nativity scene by rubbish bins is, inadvertently, a potent reminder that the baby would grow up to bear the wounds of love on a cross, placed at the city rubbish dump.

The astonishing reality is that God intervened, as a vulnerable baby, among the life-waste of an outhouse. John Andrew puts it: *"Christmas time reminds us that God has views on garbage disposal; that God is the heart and soul conservation of life in the world. By intervening personally to live among it, and finally to save it by being disposed of, God has plans for us. And waste is not part of them."*

As I walked back up to St Andrew's and St George's West Church that Sunday, I noted, with fresh eyes, the set of those same council rubbish bins beside our church building. I look at them differently now. May they serve as a reminder that we are in the world as living witness to the dignity of all, and that no-one in God's view is disposable, worthless or undeserving of love and care. God-with-us stands against a throw-away mentality and inability to care for what has been entrusted to us, including one another.



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one another.

The daughter of a friend of mine remarked recently that 2020 has been a 'bit of a rubbish year.' Well said. There can be no doubt this year has brought unprecedented challenges. And it is for that very reason that we can never think of it as a 'wasted' year. There has been too much pain to allow any of it to go to waste.

This is the time to stop and take stock of hard-earned learnings. What matters to us? What would have to be taken away from us to realize the responsibility each of us has for this world, the communities where we live, and the people with whom we share the streets of this city? What will be different in 2021 because of what happened in 2020?

At time of writing I do not yet know if the nativity scene has been moved from behind the bins on Princes Street. If it has, perhaps by our living we can be a continued presence. A reminder that no one is 'waste' in God's economy. In fact if we want to find God, the first place to look is beside, what the world considers the lost, the least and the last.



Special events for Advent and Christmas



Fri 18 Dec 6pm Carols at Six at Home

- online only
- www.stagw.org.uk/carols-at-six-at-home

Sat 19 Dec 7pm Sing-along Christmas Carols

- live online
- please get in touch for joining details

Sun 20 Dec 10.30am Worship & Nativity

- BSL signed
- in person in the sanctuary (please book a space)
- online and by telephone 0131 297 4717

Mon 21 Dec 4pm Blue Christmas Service

- in person in the sanctuary (please book a space)
- audio online after the service

Thurs 24 Dec 7.30pm Christmas Eve audio service

- online and by phone 0131 297 4717

25 Dec 10.30am Christmas morning worship

- in person in the sanctuary (please book a space)
- online and by phone 0131 297 4717

Sunday 27 Dec 10.30am worship led by Moderator

- no service in the sanctuary that day
- online and by phone 0131 297 4717

Worship with us in person

The easiest way to book your space is online through Eventbrite at this link www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/st-andrews-and-st-georges-west-3838038513

You can also book by phone Wed-Fri 11am -1pm 07956 336 953

Worship with us online

Subscribe to our YouTube channel to be notified when our services go live.

www.youtube.com/channel/UCK7tJxyWIB5Ed0hKx_PEdUQ

Our website www.stagw.org.uk signposts you to a page for each service with video or audio and an order of service.

Worship with us by telephone

You can listen to an audio recording Sundays from about noon on 0131 297 4717



Christian Aid at St Andrew's and St George's West

Pictures from the Autumn Art Sale held 24-26 October 2020.

The sale raised £22,592 and CA Treasurer Don Rolls has now sent £18,000 to Christian Aid as our contribution in 2020. Arthur Chapman and Mary Davidson thank the members of the congregation who give their support to this event in every possible way, and are also grateful for the generosity of Scottish Artists and that of people from other Edinburgh congregations.





Moments In Nature Greetings Cards & 2021 Desk Calendars

Stocks of Pat McKerrow's new design Greetings Cards as well as 2021 Desk Calendars are now available for purchase – ideal for Christmas gifts!

The cards come in two different packs, ie 'Water Birds', which includes images of Swan, Puffin, Gannet, Barnacle goose, and Kingfisher; and 'Garden Birds' which includes images of Blue, Great and Coal Tits, Green and Gold Finches, and Blackbird. Each pack contains 8 cards, blank inside for your own messages.

The 2021 Calendar has images of Swans, Otter, Highland Cow, Puffins, Mountain Hare, Red Squirrel, and more.

Packs of cards are £10 each; Calendars also £10 each – both plus any p&p. Please contact Pat for more information or to place an order – kerrowpat@gmail.com or 07971 525377.



STAGW Book Group

Veronica Crerar

Amanda Mukwashi of Christian Aid was a delightful guest at our recent meeting and added a great deal to our understanding of her book ***Where are you really from?*** She left us thinking about the history of Africa, the hangover of colonialism, the struggle for meaningful independence in many African countries, the continuing effect of world-wide capitalism on emerging countries, the lack of welcome or even acceptance of immigrants here and the resulting lack of diversity, the importance of always trying to understand God's purpose for each of us and always remembering that the things which we all have in common are far more important than the things which divide us.

We next meet on 18th January at 10am for 10.30am and agreed that we would try to keep to a regular meeting date of the third Monday of the month. We will be reading ***Letters and papers from prison*** by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. There are problems connected with this. It is now out of print, but Amazon still has a few new copies for sale: second-hand copies are widely available online and elsewhere and a number of members of the group already have a copy. The other difficulty is that it is not a particularly easy read. However, Bonhoeffer is a toweringly inspirational figure, so let's give it a try. No gain without pain and all that! Colin Douglas will lead our discussion on the 18th.

In the meantime, over the long Christmas holidays, by way of light relief, those of you who have not already read them, are encouraged to read ***Stories we tell ourselves*** by Richard Holloway or ***Jack*** by Marilynne Robinson, both recently published.

New members are always welcome – please get in touch through the church office if you would like to know more.



Made in Lockdown 2020

Creative TOGETHER, our ecumenical craft group, recently delivered a carload of blankets, jumpers and teddies knitted in lockdown to Edinburgh Direct Aid (EDA) in Granton. These will now be on their way to EDA's base in the refugee camps in Arsal in North Lebanon near the Syrian border.

EDA provides practical support solo and with partners to the large community of Syrian refugees, half of whom are children, who are stranded here. Their projects include education and vocational training in skills such as sewing and woodworking.

Some of these refugees were forced to destroy their own homes in Arsal in 2019 after a sudden change in the law.

Yet, in summer 2020 after the devastating port explosion in Beirut, a team of refugee carpenters trained in EDA workshops and funded by a special EDA appeal made their way down to the capital to help to rebuild houses shattered by the explosion, helping to rebuild the country which is sheltering them from the war in their homeland.



Syrian refugees in the Edinburgh Direct Aid / Green Helmets construction team prepare replacement windows

You can read more about this wonderful story in news posts on EDA's Facebook page.

Worship at STAGW

Sunday Worship 10.30am

In person

We are open for worship with a single Sunday service at 10.30am in our sanctuary. Rev Dr Rosie Magee and members of our community lead 40 minutes of words, prayer and music. Spaces are limited to 50 so if you would like to come please book a space online 24/7 through Eventbrite at www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/st-andrews-and-st-georges-west-3838038513 or by calling 07956 336 953 (phone line open 11am-1pm Wed-Fri only)

Online

The service is livestreamed on our YouTube channel. You can find an order of service and the YouTube link for each service on our website – our home page www.stagw.org.uk will signpost you. The link to each service goes live about an hour before the service starts.

No internet access?

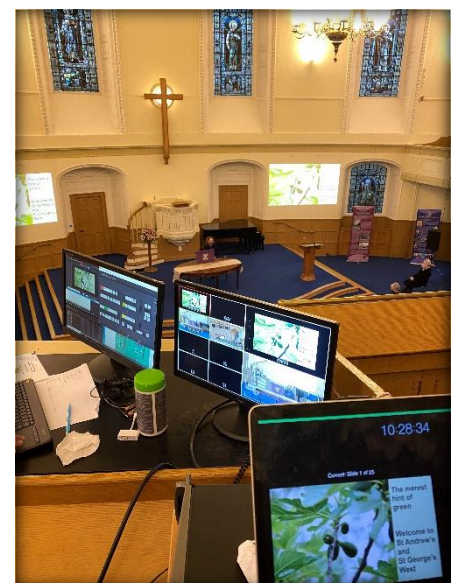
If you don't have internet access you can listen to an audio recording on Sunday from about noon on a dedicated local line 0131 297 4717. We can also mail out CD's of services if you prefer – please get in touch to arrange this.

Pause for Prayer

Daily prayers to your inbox and on Facebook. Contact us if you would like to receive these by email.

Our sanctuary is open

We're open for private prayer and to visit. Currently (Dec 2020) 11.30am-2.30pm Monday-Friday.



The Undercroft Café is open!

Alison Campbell



The Undercroft café is open now until 22 December, 11.30 till 2.30, Monday to Thursday. Then to celebrate 2021, from Tuesday 5 January we will be open Tuesday to Friday, 11.30 to 2.30.

We have changed the layout and introduced table service, to make sure everyone is safe – so no-one needs to be the least nervous about visiting. The menu has been simplified, with home-made vegetarian soups, delicious sweet and savoury scones, wonderful calorie-filled cakes and Barbara's famous tray bakes. Each day there is a different soup and a speciality scone (what about cranberry, or pear and Stilton!)

We are delighted to welcome back our "Young Vollies" who are working hard to keep everything sanitised and hygienic, and a select band of Crofters. With the unflappable and ever-smiling Pete, it is so good to be back. Please come, and bring your friends to support our Community Café with a **warm** welcome and **ethical** attitude.

The Undercroft Café
a community café with a **warm** welcome
and an **ethical** attitude

Re-opening on
24 NOV

Vegetarian soups • Fresh-baked scones, cakes
Coffees, teas, soft drinks • Fair trade • local ingredients
A place of warm welcome that doesn't cost the Earth

Opening hours: **Mon to Thu • 11.30am–2.30pm**

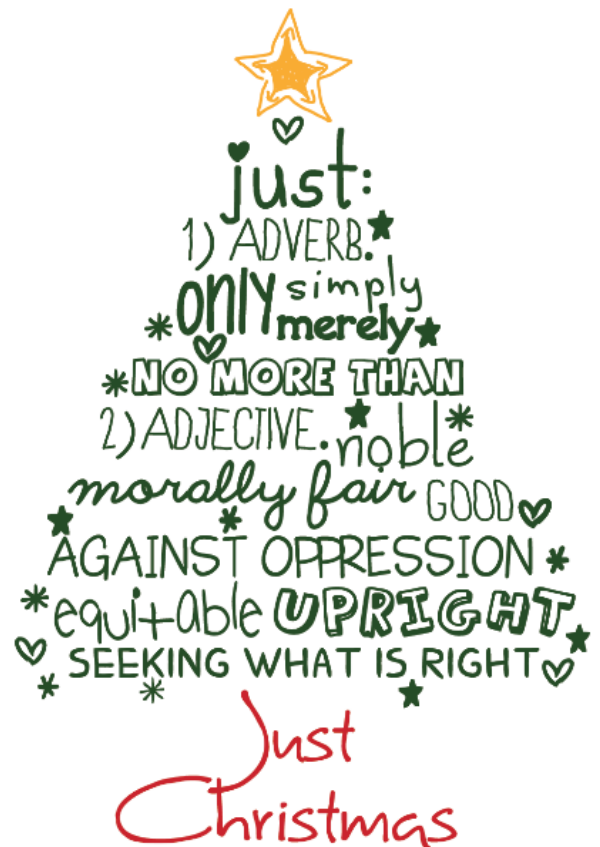
@UndercroftCafe FREE WiFi

St Andrew's & St George's West
13 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 2PA
Tel: 0131 225 3847
stags.org.uk @stags1

Just Christmas

Dorothy Tarrant

Several years ago one of the major charities challenged me with their campaign slogan, “Make it a just Christmas.” It was a reminder that when we celebrate Christ’s coming into the world, we celebrate one whose mission was to bring good news to the poor, to alleviate suffering and to right inequality and injustice – a mission passed on to us his followers.



The concept of a “just Christmas” has stayed with me, and this year in particular, when much of the focus is on how we can “get back to normal” and find ways to reconnect with family and friends, it seems important to consider how our celebrations impact others and make room for sharing with those who have less than us. We have all received Christmas appeals from charities that we already support. IF we plan to send cards this year there are many charity cards to choose from (some even have scenes from the Gospel story), along with plastic-free, recycled gift-wrap. Some charities allow us to choose Christmas gifts with enough variety to please all tastes. For example, “Christian Aid Charity gifts” <https://charity-gifts.christianaid.org.uk/> offers 10 cocoa saplings, a beehive, a cow or a goat, training in tailoring or investment in a mobile health clinic. Embrace the Middle East has an Olive Tree Project which gives you the opportunity to plant an olive tree in Palestine for £5: www.embraceme.org/olive-tree-project.

The John Muir Trust lets you adopt an acre of wild mountain landscape (e.g. on the slopes of Ben Nevis) underwriting its care for one year! It’s amazing what you can find online if you browse around a little!

For those who prefer live shopping we suggest you stop in at Hadeel (123 George St) or the One World Shop in the basement of St John's for lovely hand-made, fair traded gifts. Or take time to explore Edinburgh's abundant charity shops for pre-loved, recycled, as-good-as new books, clothes and bric-a-brac. Save money, protect the planet and support a good cause! And if you don't yet have a tree, there is time until December 14th to order one from Bethany's caring Christmas Trees Project:
www.caringchristmastrees.com.

Feeding the hungry seems especially important at Christmas. I was impressed by what I read on Mary's Meals website:
www.marysmeals.org/big-family-christmas for £15.90, less than the cost of a traditional Christmas dinner, you can feed a child at school for a year in one of the world's poorest countries. The UK government will double this – so you will effectively be feeding two children for a year. A local initiative is Just Gifts, established to support Soul Food which provides weekly meals to those facing food poverty at a growing number of churches across Edinburgh:
www.facebook.com/justgiftsedinburgh.

I am reminded of the words of that Band Aid song, "Do they know it's Christmas?" which raised so much money for the victims of famine in Ethiopia back in 1984.

**At Christmas time, we let in light and we banish shade
And in our world of plenty we can spread a smile of joy
Throw your arms around the world at Christmas time...**

We want to do this all year long, but especially at Christmas.



What can I do about modern-day slavery?

Dorothy Tarrant



In response to the recent Sunday reflection on modern day slavery, several of you have asked, “How can I tell if someone is enslaved?” “What are the signs” ,“Is there anything I can do?”

Firstly, learn more. There are many organizations working to end slavery and support victims. In the UK two which have the clear and informative websites are Antislavery and Unseen (which gave us Tania’s story):

www.antislavery.org/slavery-today/slavery-uk/

www.unseenuk.org/modern-slavery

Both of these websites list tell-tale signs that someone might be trapped in slavery, and give numbers that can be called to report your suspicions.

Secondly, open your eyes to notice the people you may take for granted, working in menial jobs, perhaps frightened, reluctant to make contact. Just your noticing them may give them courage and hope.

Thirdly, if you do suspect that someone is in trouble, do not confront the situation, but call the police or a helpline to express your concerns.

Pray that justice will be done and for the liberation of the oppressed.

Listen again to **Servant Hands**, our service on 15 November led by Dorothy Tarrant and Rosie Magee, at www.stagw.org.uk/online-worship-sunday-15-november/



Hope, Peace, Joy and Love

Advent Snapshots

Thanks to everyone who sent contributions for our Facebook and Twitter “advent calendar” of hope, peace, joy and love. Here are a few - follow us on Facebook and Twitter for the full selection.



Four years ago I spent Christmas in northern Greece. The Greek Evangelical Church that our team was partnering with in ministering to Syrian refugees held a lovely Christmas Bazar to raise funds for this work. I purchased this dove as a reminder to pray for peace in Syria. The war still continues, completing almost 10 years of horrific violence and destruction. 12 million people have been displaced from their homes, half a million have been killed. Half of those impacted have been children. Too many have lost everything, suffered and died. Please join me in praying for peace.

Dorothy



LOVE
Holy Family from Maputo
Dorothy Mackenzie



Advent HOPE
dawn in the Arizona
desert, image of hope
and new life.

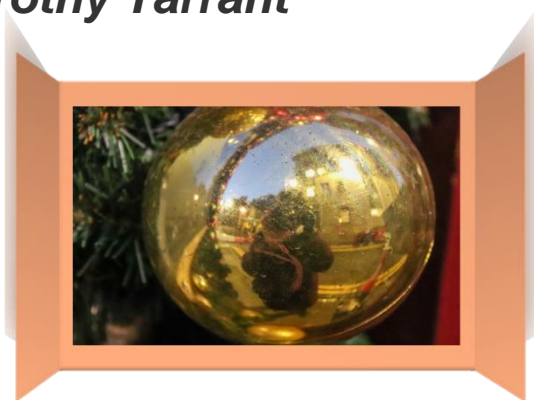
DD



This week the Jewish community is celebrating Hanukkah, lighting the candles on the Menorah one by one, as we light the candles on our Advent wreaths. The greatly respected and beloved Rabbi Jonathan Sachs, who died in November, encouraged interfaith cooperation with these words:

'For though my faith is not yours, and your faith is not mine, if we each are free to light our own flame, together we can banish some of the darkness of the world.'

Dorothy Tarrant

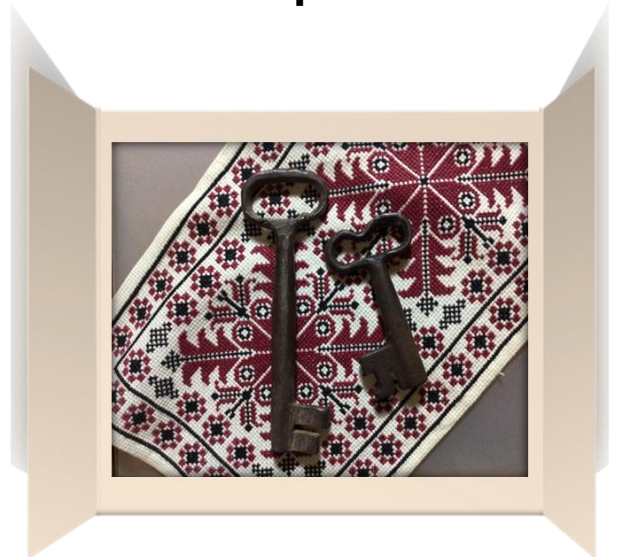


In this difficult year Advent seems like a time to be aware of what is now behind and to look forward in HOPE to the light of what is to come.

Frances Cooper



JOY– the story of Christmas
Pat Mckerrow and Jimmy Campbell



These are real house keys of Palestinians who had to leave their homes in 1947. They kept the keys, hoping one day to return. The cloth is embroidered in Palestine. This reminds me of the verse in the hymn 'O come thou Key of David, and open wide our heavenly home... and close the path to misery.'

Susan McLarty

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info@stagw.org.uk



Booking online through Eventbrite:

www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/st-andrews-and-st-georges-west-3838038513

Booking worship by phone: 07956 336 953 (11-1 Wed-Fri only)

Telephone audio service: 0131 297 4717

www.stagw.org.uk



stagw



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Chaplaincy

St Andrew's and St George's West Church of Scotland Edinburgh

is a registered charity. Scottish charity number SC008990