

The Church of Scotland  
Maxton and Mertoun linked with Newtown linked with St Boswells  
Scottish Charities No: SC013481, SC000575, SC010210

December 2020

Dear friends

Greetings from the Manse. Christmas is coming – which is one of the many Carols we normally like singing in Church at this time, as we light the advent candles that brightly burn in a ring. Although this year will of course be different!

But I begin this letter to you with grateful thanks, firstly for all the harvest donations from our Schools, which were taken to Galashiels and Jedburgh Foodbanks, and the donations of money so gratefully received for the foodbanks too. A total of £344 was shared between the foodbanks in Galashiels and Jedburgh and, as we now have one in Newtown, they received their share.

Our Harvest season was a special month and at this time we also did our usual collection for Blythswood. A huge thank you to all who donated shoe boxes for their 2020 appeal. As a Charge we collected 43 boxes which were handed over at the beginning of November.

This Christmas season I hope that you will be able to join us in some way as we celebrate Jesus' birth, which brings me to another thank you. Thank you to the children of Newtown and St Boswells Primary Schools for their lovely pictures for our annual Christmas Card competition. The judges had a hard time deciding which ones to make into the cards, one of which is included in this letter to you. This year is of course very different in that there is no newsletter to display the overall winner of the competition, but none the less, we thank them for their art work once again.

One of the songs which we may hear if we are able to do any shopping is one that the Newtown Community Choir sings at this time of the year - the John Lennon song – 'And so this is Christmas'. The line goes on to say 'and what have you done, another year over and a new one just begun', which is a bit confusing as the new year does not begin until a week after Christmas! But for this year, the part that rings bells for me is 'and what have you done'. As we do come to the end of this year, how has this year been different for us? It is hard to comprehend that this year has been so different. I think about all the new things that we have learned from the Springtime and the seasons that have come and gone. We have been fortunate that, for a good part of lockdown, those of us who were able, managed to go out, and were amazed at the beauty of nature which seemed to flourish as all around was so quiet. There was a peacefulness, as people were not dashing around, in a hurry to get to and from places.

The time has gone quite quickly, and now it is Christmas. I am not sure as I write what kind of Christmas it will be, but one thing I am sure about is that it will be remembered. I wonder though if the reason we celebrate will be at the forefront or whether it will be the restrictions that are part of our lives that we will mostly remember. Of course, Christmas is about more than the tinsel and the lights we see around. It is the very down to earth story of the birth of Jesus, God's Son, and that will never change. The festivities, the services will be different, but the mystery of God Incarnate, God Emmanuel will be there for us, a timeless message of hope, of love.

We may be facing a bleak mid-winter, and frosty winds may blow, but we will also find joy in the lights and the songs and in caring for one another this Christmas.

*Continued overleaf*

Our December Services will have a theme of HOPE, given that we could all do with a little bit of hope in this time of restriction.

For the Sundays in Advent and January our services are as follows:

	All Services at 10.30am		
Newtown	6 December	** 27 December	17 January
Mertoun	13 December	3 January	24 January
St Boswells	20 December	10 January	31 January

**\*\* Please book your place for the service on 27<sup>th</sup> December before 23<sup>rd</sup> December.**

To reserve a seat for worship please contact by phone, the following people from the Church where the service is being held, on the Friday from 6pm on the weekend of the service, giving your name and telephone number. A list of attendees is kept for 'Trace and Protect' which is compulsory:

St Boswells: Mrs Lucy Smith: 01835 822425

Newtown: Mrs Winnie Milligan: 01835 823457

Mertoun: Mrs Anne Campbell: 01835 822174

The Sunday services continue to be uploaded to the Charge website as well as being recorded for the on-demand phone line which is: 01896 404491.

In addition to these services we shall have a Christingle Service via Zoom. You can pick up a Christingle making kit from St Boswells Church between 2 & 3pm on the 24<sup>th</sup> December and join the Zoom link at 3.45pm for our service beginning at 4pm. As we make our Christingles we shall hear the story of Jesus birth, and even sing some Carols, which we are not permitted to do in Church. The ID and Passcode are:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84038169762?pwd=Qk1zbmdpWmt1S1BNWnVCOGHlUjg4dz09>

Meeting ID: 840 3816 9762

Passcode: 322937

And on Christmas Day, in the comfort of your own home, and you can even come in your PJ's, join us on this special day, show off some of your presents and gifts that were under your tree, for a short family service on Zoom as follows:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83978272445?pwd=N2o0SEFtdm9aZ0FPcGFtVmpyWG42UT09>

Meeting ID: 839 7827 2445

Passcode: 331175

I wish you all a very blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year and look forward to meeting you all once again in a more normal way when the restrictions are lifted. Please take care and keep being kind to one another.

Shalom

*Sheila*