

# *The Outlook*

magazine of Inverleith St Serf's  
Church

December 2023/January 2024



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## Next Issue

**Copy for the February 2024 issue of *The Outlook* should be with the editor no later than Wednesday, January 17. The distribution date will be Sunday, January 28.**

**This month's cover: courtesy of Bing**

**[www.inverleithsaintserfs.org.uk](http://www.inverleithsaintserfs.org.uk) Scottish charity No: SC015442**

# ***What Christmas means to me - by Liz Mackenzie***

***Brought up on a remote sheep farm, Liz's  
memories of Christmas are a little different  
from those of city-dwellers***

When I think of Christmas, I think of lights, wood fires, warmth and the drawing together of people in a cold dark snowy season. I grew up on a remote sheep farm in a highland community, so perhaps my early experiences were a bit different to those of most people attending a church in Edinburgh.

In our family, Christmas didn't really start until Christmas Eve when a snowy, often lopsided sapling was dragged in to dry off so it could be trimmed and safely decorated. There then followed an express



Image from <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/christmas-carol-singing-stan-pritchard.html> (originally from a 1990 Royal Mail Christmas stamp)

house tidy up. It's amazing how lovely a place can look if you dim the lights and put up tinsel!

My favourite part of Christmas was always the Christmas Eve carol singing. Half the village would pile into cars and go round the local community singing from the Barnado's carol sheet. It was incredibly inclusive with many people who possibly couldn't sing coming along for the dumpling and the cheer. There were always enough good singers to make this ok. We had a Land Rover and in the back, a paraffin Tilly lamp to light the way. It hissed and kept us all warm. Singing and jokes continued as we travelled between places and we usually ended up with more passengers than we started off with. When we got out and sang, the lamp was raised on a pitch fork so everyone could see their carol sheet. Smaller groups in sturdy vehicles attended the more remote and snowy homes. It was really unlucky if someone with a loud voice started a carol off in the wrong key. Sometimes there was nothing else for it but to start again.

### **Music - central to Christmas**

Music is still one of the most enjoyable parts of Christmas for me and I'm grateful for these opportunities. I hope my singing has improved a bit since those days. Christmas is still a time for bringing everyone together. Drawing all the flock into the fold and keeping everyone warm, not leaving anyone out in the cold. It's a time when I try to truly count my blessings particularly in the unfair society we live in today. It's pretty shocking that Jesus had to be born in a stable and when we look at the world, little has changed now. Having said that, Jesus and his family managed just fine with the simplest of facilities and people did step in to help, which gives me hope.

## ***Worship in December***

The Rev Dorothy U Anderson will conduct the Sunday 10.30am, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services in the sanctuary

Everyone is welcome

December 3      10.30 worship in the sanctuary  
Gift Collection for Circle (see p 9)  
Hearts available for Tree of Remembrance  
(see p8)  
Fresh Start collection of household goods  
15.00 A Time to remember service (see p7)



December 4      10.30 Pram Service in the small hall

December 10     10.30 worship in the sanctuary  
Christmas card collection (see p15)  
Hearts available for Tree of Remembrance



December 17     09.30 Early Birds (small hall)  
10.30 Lessons and carols in the sanctuary  
Christmas card collection  
Hearts available for Tree of Remembrance

18.30 Carol Service with Granton Parish Church in Inverleith St Serf's (see p7)



December 24     10.30 worship in the sanctuary  
18.00 Family Service in the sanctuary  
23.30 Watchnight service in the sanctuary

December 25     10.30 Christmas morning worship in the sanctuary



December 31     10.30 worship in the sanctuary

There is no afternoon communion in December or January

## ***Worship in January***

January 7 10.30 worship in the sanctuary  
Fresh Start collection of household goods

January 14 10.30 worship in the sanctuary

January 21 09.30 Early Birds (small hall)  
10.30 worship in the sanctuary

January 28 10.30 worship in the sanctuary

There is no Pram Service or afternoon communion in January

## ***Church Family***

### **Death**

*'There is nothing in death or life, in the world as it is, or the world as it shall be, nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord'*

Mrs Christine Graham

Our thoughts and prayers are with her family and friends.

## ***Pastoral arrangements***

Please contact Dorothy Millar regarding pastoral issues such as illness. The local undertakers are aware of arrangements if a member dies.

## ***A Time to Remember Service*** ***Sunday December 3 at 3pm***

This short reflective service of worship offers a quiet space for those who are grieving the loss of a loved one over recent times. All are welcome to join us in this service.

Refreshments will be served in the small hall thereafter.

*Dorothy Millar*  
*Pastoral Care Convener*



CAROLS & READINGS  
**A FEAST OF  
ADVENT**  
Come Carolling with Granton Parish  
and Inverleith St Serf's Churches  
SUNDAY 17TH DECEMBER  
6.30PM  
Inverleith St Serf's Church  
Ferry Road, Edinburgh  
Festive refreshments  
after the Service  
  
[www.grantonchurch.org.uk](http://www.grantonchurch.org.uk) [www.inverleithstserfs.org.uk](http://www.inverleithstserfs.org.uk)

## ***Festive carols***

December 17 promises to offer a real feast of carols and readings.

At 10.30am we will have a service of readings and carols as our usual morning worship.

Then, in the evening (6.30pm), please come and join us for a joint service of carols and readings with Granton Parish Church and Inverleith St Serf's Church choirs.

Date: 17 December

Time: 6.30pm at Inverleith St Serf's Church

Festive refreshments will be served after the 6.30pm service.

# ***Christmas Tree of Remembrance***

This year the artificial tree will be in the entrance to the Church Centre so that you will have more opportunity to hang your heart on it, with your personal message.

You will be able to collect your heart at the Church Centre door or from the Church vestibule on the **first three Sundays in Advent - December 3, 10 and 17.**

From all the Pastoral Care Team, we wish you every joy and blessing this Christmas.

*Dorothy Millar*  
*Pastoral Care Convener*







## **Christmas Toys 2023**

**December 3 –**

### **A reminder**

Each year, Christmas gifts for children and teenagers are donated to local families through Circle, a charity based in Pilton. Our team has worked with Circle for many years to ensure that children and teenagers get a gift at Christmas. Circle (<https://circle.scot/>) supports local families who face exclusion due to social injustice, poverty and health inequalities.

If you wish to support this work, please bring a gift to the Church Service on **Sunday December 3 at 10.30am.**

This year we are asking you to bring the toys **unwrapped**, so that parents can be more involved in choosing a gift for their child. We are also asking that you give wrapping paper and a tag along with your gift.

Members of the Early Birds and Pram Service Team will be in church to receive your gifts.

*Early Birds and Pram Service Team*

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## **Christmas Early Birds**

**December 17**

There will be a special Christmas Early Bird service on Sunday December 17 at 9.30am in the small hall. We will tell the Christmas story followed by Christmas crafts and snacks. We hope to see lots of you there.

*The Early Birds Team*



## ***Flowers in the Church for the year ahead***

Thanks to all of you who have already given flowers this year. I am now inviting requests from those who would like to give flowers for the Sundays between the start of March 2024 and the end of August 2024. (I am not filling dates too far ahead because of the Presbytery Plan).

A gift of £20 – perhaps a way of remembering a special person or event - puts flowers in the church on a Sunday. The flowers enhance the beauty of the service and afterwards they are delivered to members of the congregation who are ill, bereaved or celebrating an important date.



If you would like to give flowers or to discuss any aspect of the flowers – donation, arrangement or delivery - please email the general enquiries mailbox: [InverleithStSerfs@gmail.com](mailto:InverleithStSerfs@gmail.com). You could also catch up with me after the service on a Sunday.

*Margaret Colquhoun, Flower Convener*

## ***Presbytery Plan update***

***Sandy Pratt, joint Session Clerk, confirms that union plans are stalled but we continue to work towards union***

It has been a while since I was able to give you some information about the state of progress with the planned unions of Inverleith St Serf's, Granton and Stockbridge. Shortly after the new Presbytery Plan was approved in March of this year, the Stockbridge congregation lodged an appeal against the process followed by the Deployment of Resources Committee of the Presbytery.

Subsequently, Helen (my fellow Session Clerk) and I received an email from the temporary session clerk at Stockbridge saying that the congregation did not wish to be united with us and Granton but saw their future being with other congregations in the city centre.

### **Stockbridge's appeal re Presbytery Plan process**

Helen Hannan and I were advised by the Presbytery Clerk in July that the Stockbridge appeal had been referred to a committee of the Faith Forum at the Church's national office for consideration. Since then, I am sorry to report that nothing more has been heard from either that committee or the Presbytery.

### **Moving forward with Granton**

In the absence of any decisions or guidance from the Presbytery or national church office bearers, the Kirk Sessions at Granton and Inverleith St Serf's have sought to work together with a view to move towards our union with or without Stockbridge congregation. As you will know, Granton hosted a Saturday afternoon tea-and-chat

in early September and we are going to hold a joint carol service (see p7). Other joint activities will emerge over the coming months.

It is disappointing that I can only tell you that there is nothing to report. Both Helen Hannan and I are deeply frustrated by the lack of information and a complete inability to make timely decisions by both the Presbytery and the National Faith Forum. Despite the statements from General Assembly committees and national church office bearers of a rapidly declining number of church members throughout Scotland, it seems that there is a complete lack of urgency throughout the tiers of decision-making committees and conveners.

Helen and I will, of course, keep you informed of any news as soon as it becomes available.

*Sandy Pratt,*

*November 14, 2023*



## ***Tips for a greener Christmas***

***As always, we need to think about reducing our use of energy and resources to what is necessary and not what we have always done.***

***Could you try one or two of these tips? Every little helps!***

### **Cards and wrapping paper:**

- \* Avoid products with glitter and foil because they aren't always recyclable.



- \* Join the new Church

Christmas Card Initiative and send just one card to the whole church family - to be displayed in church as part of our seasonal decorations. You might like to send the money you save to a charity of your choice *\*(see note below)*.

- \* Cut out postage stamps leaving a 0.5cm border and preserve interesting franking messages which can enhance the value of stamps to collectors. Used stamps may be brought to church throughout the year and put in the containers at the main church entrance. They will be donated to St Columba's Hospice.

### **Gifts:**

- \* Choose sustainable gifts: organic, Fairtrade, local, home-made ...
- \* Choose events or experiences rather than something manufactured.
- \* Have fun matching ethical / virtual gifts to the interests of recipients *(available from most charities)*.
- \* Make or bake gifts using natural / ethical materials and

ingredients.

- \* Get younger family members to decorate brown paper or newspaper with colourful potato prints in seasonal designs.
- \* Use string or ribbon rather than sticky tape, which sometimes tears the paper on opening. Unwrap gifts carefully and save the paper for another year.

### **Food:**

- \* Try to follow LOAFS principles when you are shopping: **L** for local / **O** for organic / **A** for animal friendly (*free range / high welfare standards*) / **F** for Fairtrade / **S** for seasonal.
- \* Build the use of leftovers into your menu planning to reduce food waste and prevent organic matter going into landfill where it creates methane.

### **Christmas tree:**

This is a tricky one. If you balance the loss of carbon sequestration when a tree is cut down against the carbon released into the atmosphere when an artificial tree is manufactured, it really comes down to how long you keep the artificial tree for. But there are some artificial trees that do less damage than others. If you Google 'environmentally friendly artificial Christmas trees', you will find a range of trees made from PVC, whose manufacture causes less environmental damage than 'regular' artificial trees. Inevitably they are more expensive – but, if you decide to keep them for a number of years, you probably won't be too much out of pocket and you might just be on the right side of the carbon footprint!

## **Meeting friends and family:**

Try to use public transport or car share so there are fewer vehicles on the roads emitting carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

## ***The Eco Group***

*More tips next year!*

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## ***\*Congregational Christmas Cards - save paper!***

*As mentioned last month, we are encouraging you to send one Christmas Card to the whole congregation and so cut down on paper and manufacturing costs.*

*Bring your card any time after December 10 and before Christmas - boxes will be in the vestibules. Cards will be displayed on the boards at the back of the sanctuary.*



## ***Foodbank during Advent***

The Granton Foodbank collections will continue as normal during the season of Advent. Specific items with a Christmas theme will be very welcome, such as chocolate selection boxes, packets of sweets, boxes or tins of biscuits/shortbread, sultana/cherry cakes, tinned custard and fruit, trifle sponges, as well as the usual donations of tinned meats, coffee, tea and diluting drinks.

Please note that no items should contain alcohol, so no Christmas puddings but other puddings will be acceptable.

## ***Update***

### ***Embrace the Middle East***

While we may be geographically distant from the turmoil that is currently taking place in Israel and Palestine, we can take heart from the fact that our impact as a church is being felt. Our financial contributions to Embrace the Middle East have never been more important than they are at this time. Through prayer and active giving we are making a difference (quite possibly life-saving) to many people who are experiencing the most desperate of circumstances.

As we approach the end of our period of support for Embrace, we can still keep up-to-date with all that they do. Their website is full of God's love in action. In particular, have a look at their online shop for wonderful Christmas cards and gifts. At our services on Christmas Eve, we will have our final opportunity to give financial support through our offerings, which will be split between Embrace and church funds.

In the next issue of *The Outlook*, we will be able to state how much we have raised for Embrace since they have been our chosen charity.

Perhaps as individuals we can continue to offer our support. The work will not go away.

<https://shop.embraceme.org>

*James Robertson*





## Guild news



## Look forward in faith New Wine, New Wineskins



*A musical Christmas  
December 12*

We are delighted that so many have come along to our Guild meetings this session and enjoyed the interesting talks and fellowship.

Do join us on December 12 for 'A Musical Christmas' with Matthew Bicket on piano.

We start the new year with two 'in house' contributions:

January 9 'Scotland v The World' led by Lorna Pratt.

January 23 'Treasures in Inverleith House' (Fiona Davies)

We are still collecting milk bottle tops, stamps and 5p coins. Bring them along to our meetings.

*Fiona Davies*



*Inverleith House. January 23.  
Courtesy of RBGE*

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pram Service</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>December 4</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>10.30am</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>No January Pram Service</u></p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Inverleith St Serf's Church <b>Pram Service</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">First Monday of each month during school term <b>10:30am</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Everyone welcome!</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Fun, free and friendly service suitable for babies and children up to School age. Learning through stories, songs and arts and crafts</p>
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## Christmas Coffee House



Friday December 8  
in the Church Centre  
Anytime from 10.00 - 11.45am

All welcome to come for a cup of coffee or tea, a treat and a chat with friends or arrange to meet friends for a social morning.

We look forward to seeing everyone on December 8.

January Coffee House: Friday January 12, in the Church Centre from 10am.

**No Nostalgia Café in December**

**Next Nostalgia Café is on Thursday January 25**

**at 2pm.**

**All welcome**



## ***Let us pray ...***

At this time of year, Christmas itself can distract us from its purpose and its source in God.

At a time of looking back we will have regrets.

In looking forward we may find it hard to see God at work.

It can be hard to be faithful year after year.



God of all,

all creation is invited to praise You, giving thanks to our Creator.

Yet we struggle to be grateful, when we see loss, fear and destruction in the world.

We struggle to praise, when we are afraid to look at ourselves before You.

We struggle to turn to You, when we are distracted by this season.

God with us,

all peoples are invited to come close, welcoming You into our lives.

Yet we struggle to walk with You, day after day, in the mess of our lives.

We struggle to welcome You when You come in those different from us.

We struggle to look ahead with You, into another year of uncertainty.

God of all,

You know all of this, and still You love us.

God with us,

You know all of this, and still You come, inviting us to come close.

So, set us free from our fears and struggles.

Heal us of our hopelessness.

Forgive us our mistakes.

And open our hearts to know that You are with us,

Your Spirit filling us and Your love guiding us,

this day and in the days to come,

through Jesus, Your Son,

Amen



EDINBURGH  
ORCHESTRA

**Judith Weir**

New Every Morning  
(2021)

**Grieg** Piano Concerto in A  
minor, op. 16  
Andrew Johnston—piano

**Schubert** Symphony no.  
9 in C major (Great C  
major)  
D 944

Tim Paxton, Conductor  
Joanna Duncan, Leader

7.30pm  
Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> December  
2023

Inverleith St. Serf's  
Parish Church  
280 Ferry Road,  
Edinburgh, EH5 3NP

Tickets £12/£9/children free  
From members of the orchestra,  
on the door or via our website  
<http://www.newedinburghorchestra.org.uk>

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