

Diary: November

December

1	Presbytery 7pm	
2		
3		10.30 Makerstoun
4		
5	10.30 Makerstoun	Session Meeting with Oxnam
6		
7	Scrabble 2pm	
8	The Guild 2.30pm	
9	Session Meeting 7.30pm	
10		10.30 Roxburgh
11		
12	Remembrance Day see pg.3	Scrabble 2pm, Bridge 7pm
13		Guild Christmas Social 2.30pm
14	Scrabble 2pm, Bridge 7pm	
15		
16		
17		10.30 Smail, 6.30 Stichill C.S
18		
19	10.30 Smailholm	
20		
21	Scrabble 2pm	
22		
23		
24		6.30 Makerstoun fam. service
25		
26	10.30 Stichill Communion	
27		
28	Scrabble 2pm, Bridge 7pm	
29		
30		
31		10.30 Stichill

Kelso Country Churches



The Country Link

~~~~~ November/December 2017



The parish church of note nearest our Breton home is one of the most important in the Diocese of Rennes. It has two square steeples that dominate the skyline of this part of Ille et Vilaine. Dedicated to Saint Peter it sits imposing its presence over the Commune. Inside the space is Cathedral like, completely disproportionate to the size of village it serves.

Around the walls alongside ancient artefacts the story of an active pastoral church unfolds in the story boards, posters and literature. However what impresses me most in this grand edifice is a door in the facade that sits humbly between the two grand towers. Why? Because it is half open. From the village square it invites you in. Such a simple effective mission statement. An open door. I had not been into the Commune this trip until Monday there and after lunch I walked up to sit for a while, meditate and pray. It is a great strength to know it will be there open and ready to receive me. I passed one lone young man sitting in the rear row. He was there when I left too, focussed forward into the chancel. What deep need was the parish church of Saint Peter meeting I wondered. A need that may have gone unresolved had not this sacred space been kept open. I sat a while beside a candle remembering those now among the saints, aware I would be travelling on 'toutsaints'. It was the young man though that reinforced my belief that a closed church is a scandal.

May this season of Remembrance be a time of prayerful reflection in those in Gods hands now and may your memories be hallowed by the grace that knows no bounds and is in your Saviour Jesus Christ.

Robin McHaffie

Interim Moderator

## *Parish News and Updates*

**The Harvest Offering** taken at the Harvest Thanksgiving service raised £117 and the money was sent to the charity, “Self Help Africa.”

Tickets are still available for the **Concert in Makerstoun Kirk** on Wednesday, 8<sup>th</sup> November at 7pm. Mosaic Choir and St. Mary’s School Choir will be performing and refreshments will be served. Tickets £10 or £15 for two are available from Kirsty Baird and elders of Makerstoun Kirk.

**The Guild Christmas Social** afternoon is on Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> December at 2.30pm. We welcome back the very talented “Border Tarts” to entertain with their unique selection of songs and stories. As last year, as well as welcoming visitors from other Guilds in our area, invitations will also go out to those of our church family who find it difficult to attend church or social outings. Transport will be arranged.

A festive Afternoon Tea will be served in the hall to round off what I’m sure will be an entertaining afternoon. Remember that men are also welcome to the Guild so don’t be shy Boys!

**Smailholm Church** will have an Advent service on Sunday morning of 17<sup>th</sup> December at 10.30am, which will be led by some members of the Worship Team. This will give those who can’t attend the evening service, an opportunity to share in a Christmas service.

**KCC Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols** is on Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> December in Stichill Church at 6.30pm. Members of all four churches and hopefully, the children will take part, and it all adds up to one of the highlights of our church year.

Mulled wine, mince pies and shortbread will be served in the hall so please put the date in your diary, come along and bring family and friends to this fitting way of heralding the start of Christmas week.

**Makerstoun Family Service** is on Christmas Eve at 6.30pm. The service will be organised by members of the congregation and people of all ages are warmly welcomed.

Please note there will be no Watchnight Service on Christmas Eve.

**Roxburgh Village:** residents of the village will gather round the Christmas tree at 6.30pm to sing Carols.

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### **Country Link**

You are invited to give a donation (suggested £3 annually) towards the printing costs of your magazine. There are boxes in all four churches for the purpose. THANK YOU.

**Christmas Shoeboxes** will soon be on their way to East European countries and India where they will be distributed in towns and rural districts to people who would otherwise have no presents at Christmas.

### **Date for your diary**

**The Roxburgh Singers**, under their conductor Marion Dodd are performing a Christmas Concert at Kelso Old Church at 7pm on Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> December. They are singing four Motets by Poulene, Carols by Taverna and Chilcott and popular favourites for audience participation.

Tickets £10 are available at the door or from choir members. Accompanied children free.

## *Hymns We Love – Tell out my soul, the greatness of the Lord*



This is the most widely known and frequently sung hymn written by a contemporary author. Since its publication in 1965 it has steadily found its way into every modern hymnal.

It is a poetical rendering of the Song of Mary which we know as The Magnificat (Luke 1: 46-54). Bishop Dudley-Smith (born 1926) says he

wrote it in 1961 on reading the version of the canticle in the New English Bible. He was struck by the opening words, and saw in them the first line of a poem. He speedily wrote the rest, based on the text of the NEB.

A few years later, the poem became a hymn and has found an ideal partner in the tune, *Woodlands*.

This tune was composed in 1919 by Walter Greatorex, an English composer and musician.

The hymn is generally regarded as an Advent hymn promising the coming of the Messiah but it is sung widely throughout the year.....

Tell out my soul, the greatness of the Lord!  
Unnumbered blessings, give my spirit voice;  
Tender to me the promise of his word;  
In God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.

Tell out my soul, the greatness of his name!  
Make known his might, his deeds his arm has done;  
His mercy sure, from age to age the same;  
His Holy name – the Lord, the Mighty One.

Tell out my soul, the glories of his word!  
Firm is his promise and his mercy sure.  
Tell out my soul, the greatness of the Lord  
To children's children and for evermore!

## *Preaching Plan for November/December 2017*

**November 5th** Makerstoun David Harvey

### **Remembrance Sunday**

- “ 12<sup>th</sup> **Makerstoun War Memorial:** 9.45am  
followed by service in church. Rev. McHaffie  
**Smailholm War Memorial:** 11am “  
**Nenthorn War Memorial:** 10am: Jim Smith  
**Stichill War Memorial:** 10.45am “  
followed by service in church Jim Smith  
**Hume War Memorial:** 12noon “  
**Roxburgh War Memorial:** 12 noon, Rev. McHaffie

“ 19<sup>th</sup> Smailholm Elizabeth Findlay

“ 26<sup>th</sup> Stichill **Communion** Rev Robin McHaffie

### **December**

“ 3<sup>rd</sup> Makerstoun Elizabeth Findlay

“ 10<sup>th</sup> Roxburgh Rev Robin McHaffie

“ 17<sup>th</sup> Smailholm at 10.30am Worship Team  
Stichill **Service of lessons & Carols at 6.30pm**

“ 24<sup>th</sup> Makerstoun **Christmas Eve service at 6.30pm**

“ 31<sup>st</sup> Stichill Rev Marion Dodd

### **January**

7<sup>th</sup> Makerstoun Sophia Duncan

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Retiring offerings will be taken at our joint services on 5th, 19th and 26th November for the refugees fleeing persecution in Myanmar.

Proceeds will be given to the Disasters Emergency Committee Appeal (D.E.C.)

As Remembrance Day approaches, let us read again, the famous poem written by John McCrae, a Canadian doctor, and soldier in WW1. He was inspired to write it in 1915 after presiding over the funeral of a friend and fellow soldier who died in the second Battle of Ypres.

*In Flanders field the poppies blow
between the crosses, row on row,
that mark our place; and in the sky
the larks, still bravely singing, fly,
scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago
we lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
loved and were loved, and now we lie
in Flanders field.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe;
to you from failing hands we throw
the torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
we shall not sleep, though poppies grow
in Flanders field.*



*Some green thoughts in our tree's green shade –
I'll hang every evergreen memory
Of moments as melted and gone
as that candle that was supposed to smell
of cinnamon –
Memories big as a house and as small's
the baubles I used to call ball-balls.*



*With pleasure I'll treasure them
then, on proper Christmas Day, I'll show them all to you
between the Queen's Speech and Doctor Who.*



From the Editor's Desk

Dear Readers,

Can this really be the last edition of The Country Link for 2017 ? It has been a busy year with many fund-raising/social events, choir, Songs of Praise, participating in KCT activities and care home services, concert, sponsored walk and much more, as well as ensuring the continuity of our services and visiting members of our communities who are ill or not able to get to church and appreciate someone to lend an ear or a helping hand.

All these things take thought and planning and practical help to carry out, and I thank all who have helped to make things happen.

My thanks also to those who have helped me with compiling the church magazine by submitting stories and reports, proof-reading, stapling and delivering it round the districts.

This bumper edition includes details of all the services and activities in KCC during November and Advent, and I hope that it can be distributed to more homes in the parish along with a personal invitation to join in the activities.

To all our readers, have a happy Christmas and a peaceful new year.

Sophia

How I'll Decorate My Tree by Liz Lochhead

*It was still very far from Christmas
when my momma said to me:
Tell me, Precious, what you going to hang
on our Christmas tree?*

*I said: the fairy- lights that Dad just fixed!
And....jewel-coloured jelly-beans from the pick'n'mix –
Oh, and from it I'll dangle tinsel in tangles,
sparkles, sequins and spangles,
a round gold coin (chocolate money)
that cracker joke that was actually funny.
My rosary beads – and plastic rose
as red as Rudolph Reindeer's nose.
The gnome that grows the tangerines,
the picture of me with my tambourine,
and (Mum's favourite, she says)
the photo of all of us in our PJ's!
The Ladybird book that Lola sent me,
the blue butterfly bracelet that Brittany sent me.
The ear-ring I lost, a pop-up Jack Frost,
a space-hopper, an everlasting gobstopper,
a pink-eyed sugar mouse,
the keys to my grandfather's house,
a tiny pair of trainers with silver laces,
and – now my smile is straight – gonna hang up my braces!
A marble, an angel-scrap, a star,
the very last sweetie out my advent calendar.
A kiss under the mistletoe,
a mitten still cracked with a crunch and a creak of snow.
That glitter scarf I finally got sick of,
a spoon with cake-mix still to lick off.
The Dove of Peace that our Darren made,*



Sponsored Walk - Cheviot Youth says 'Thank you'

I am writing on behalf of the Trustees, staff and youngsters at Cheviot Youth to say many thanks for the gift of £838 raised by those who took part in KCC's recent sponsored walk. All of us at Cheviot Youth are very grateful for your kindness and most appreciative of your interest in the work we do.



Cheviot Youth is a generic charity serving the needs of all upper primary and secondary school pupils. Our base in Kelso is 'The Planet' (annexe of the Ice Rink). Every Wednesday and Thursday, we work with approx. 50 primary and 20 secondary school pupils providing them with a range of confidence-building activities.

Each Saturday, between the hours of 10 and 2-30, we run a cafe which is open to the general public. It's purpose is to develop the youngsters' skills in the preparation, cooking and serving of food.



Please feel free to drop in sometime - you'll be made welcome. Again many thanks for your gift, its very much appreciated and will be put to good use.

David Harvey - Chair Cheviot Youth

Pause for Thought

To love means loving the unlovable,
To forgive means pardoning the unpardonable,
Faith means believing the unbelievable,
Hope means hoping when everything seems hopeless.

Where are we? A letter from our Session Clerk, Jim Smith

KCC has now been in a vacancy for two years. During that time we have linked with Oxnam Church and have had no real enquiries regarding the vacancy.

The Church of Scotland has 220 vacant charges at this time and so we are one of many. The Nominating Committee has tried many avenues to create interest from potential ministers, but to no avail.

The fact that there is an unusual distance between our linked parishes along with the allocation of 0.75 of a ministry does not help when there is such a wide choice of vacant charges.

We recently had a joint session meeting with Oxnam when we discussed our linkage and how we may be able to go forward in our search for a minister.

This was followed by the two sessions meeting separately. After more discussion, KCC agreed not to press for a full-time minister as this would disturb the Presbytery plan, and with the scarcity of ministers, it was unwise of us to press for a full-time minister with our limited congregational numbers.

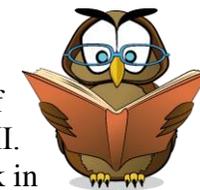
It was decided that if we are unsuccessful in calling a minister by next August/September when the current Presbytery Plan comes up for review, we will again consider the linkage and look for changes but it is right that we give it more time to succeed.

It went to Presbytery on Wednesday past and the Presbytery plan was deferred for another month, which means that most likely, we are still looking for a minister on the three-quarters basis.

Our linked parishes struggle to come together because of the distance between them, and the fact that we have a service every Sunday and need to support our own four churches. We have agreed to try to be more active socially, and to have more joint Session meetings with Oxnam. To this end, our next joint meeting is to be held on 5th December

We enter a crucial stage in the life of these parishes, with a dwindling, ageing congregation of less than 200 members and four churches to provide for. This is not unique in Scotland. Most congregations, especially in rural areas are in this position and we have to be accountable for what we do. We have probably languished too long trying to provide meaningful services in all our churches when half of them would be sufficient.

The Tartan Pimpernel by Donald Caskie



This remarkable autobiography details a Church of Scotland minister's experiences in France during WWII. The Rev Donald Caskie was the minister of the Scots Kirk in Paris at the time of the German occupation in 1940 and was forced to flee the city. However, he turned down several opportunities to return to the UK and instead became part of an underground network which helped allied servicemen escape back to their homeland.

The scale of his involvement is astonishing. It is estimated that around 3,000 British and Dominion servicemen managed to get out of occupied Western Europe and back to the UK – and it is estimated that Donald Caskie had an involvement in the safe return of approximately 2,000 of those men. As the foreword by Mike Hughes says: “This figure is all the more remarkable given that he found himself in this role with no preparation and nothing to trust in but God and his own instincts”.

During the early part of the occupation he reopened and ran the seamen's mission in Marseilles, and there he worked in his underground activities with such people as the legendary Lieut-Commander Pat O'Leary (who revealed himself after the war to be Dr Edmond Guerise) and many other selfless individuals, some of whom gave their lives for the cause. Caskie himself was eventually captured, imprisoned, and sentenced to death by the Nazis, but was saved by the intervention of a German pastor.

The book gives a detailed eyewitness account of life during the occupation and the practicalities of caring for and smuggling the men out of the country. Caskie writes with humour and candour, and tells of the times when he ran out of his own resources (whether practical, emotional or spiritual) and God stepped in. “121” – the Church of Scotland headquarters – was involved too. When a serviceman passed through the seamen's mission Caskie would send a message via Lisbon to 121, and they would immediately pass on the good news to the relieved family that their loved one was safe.

Upon his release from prison, at the end of the occupation, Donald Caskie returned to his work at the Scots Kirk in Paris, only setting down his wartime experiences in this book in 1957 when funds were required to rebuild the war-damaged church building.

I thoroughly enjoyed this inspiring autobiography – so much so that having finished it only recently I am now re-reading it! *Liz Orr*

Christmas Thoughts

Out of the box they come every Christmas – the angels! Over the years we have gathered quite a collection. The wooden blue and white foursome, set on a blue ring holding their candles.

The rather tubby junior angel in red, puffing hard at his trumpet. We find the tall thin one with a very superior expression. I think he must be a senior angel, keeping his eye on all the rest. There's posh angel, all in gold, a touch of class about that one.



We have a knitted angel too, some little stocky ones that go on the tree and those on the cloth nativity scene we hang in our hall. Hovering above the crib they look as if they are coming in to land at any moment.

All very different but with their own story, and at Christmas, they all come out. Angels are very much central to the Christmas story. We have Gabriel coming to tell Mary she has been chosen by God to bear his Son, and an angel confirmed that message to Joseph. When Jesus was born an angel brought the good news to the shepherds and a whole choir of angels sang in celebration.

Yes, Christmas angels are lovely but my favourite angel isn't just for Christmas, she lives on the wall in the kitchen all year round. My daughter gave her to me for Mothering Sunday some years ago. The angel is very cheerful, round-looking and a bit untidy – she reminds me of someone when I look in the mirror! She is good company, and I often look at her and she makes me laugh too! Written across her it says, "Do not fear, the angels are near." She is my special angel, my every day angel.

During Jesus' ministry angels came to him at very crucial times to support him, remind him of his Father's love and care. It was an angel who rolled the stone away on Easter morning and an angel who gave the good news of the resurrection to the women at the tomb. "He is not here, He is risen." The message of new life for ever.

Angels are for everyday, not just special occasions and we join their throng as we sing God's praises:

"With angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory, Hosanna in the Highest!"

What can we do?

Do we worship our God or our church? This question will be put to all Sessions by Presbytery. If you had the choice, which would you choose – a minister or a church? Hypothetical, I know, but think about it.

In the last 20 years, we have been without a minister for 8 of them (we had a four year vacancy 1997 – 2001). We are held in high regard by other ministers and congregations in Presbytery because we have an active Worship Team who conduct meaningful services and work hard to support members in times of need, but having a minister of our own is the ideal.

A service is held each Sunday at 10.30am in one of our churches, each with its own history and warm welcome, and it is well worth travelling to each of our churches as many of you do. We plan the rota of church services and preachers well in advance and will soon be planning ahead to Easter. We need to do this to get preachers booked and not to over-burden the Worship Team. If you would like a list of forthcoming services ahead of the preaching plan in the Country Link, email me and send me your email address. You need not travel alone- lifts can be arranged.

Do come and try our churches. They are warm and welcoming, the music is inspirational and there is an opportunity to share Christian fellowship over tea/coffee and tasty morsels.



Boys will be Boys!

Two young boys were spending the night at their grandparents home. At bedtime, the boys knelt beside their beds to say their prayers when the youngest one began praying very loudly.

I PRAY FOR A NEW BICYCLE....

I PRAY FOR A NEW BICYCLE....

I PRAY FOR A NEW BICYCLE....

His older brother leaned over and nudged his younger brother and said,

"Why are you shouting your prayers? God isn't deaf." To which the little lad replied, "No, but Grandma is!"



A Christmas Mistake

Each December, I vowed to make Christmas a calm and peaceful experience. I had cut back on nonessential obligations – extensive card-writing, endless baking, decorating and even overspending. Yet still I found myself exhausted, unable to appreciate the precious family moments, and of course, the true meaning of Christmas.

My son Nicholas was in kindergarten that year. It was an exciting season for a six year old. For weeks, he had been memorising songs for his school's "winter pageant".

I didn't have the heart to tell him I'd be working the night of the performance. Unwilling to miss his shining moment, I spoke with his teacher. She assured me there would be a dress rehearsal the morning of the presentation. All parents unable to attend that evening were welcome to come then.

Fortunately, Nicholas seemed happy with the compromise.

So, the morning of the dress rehearsal, I filed in ten minutes early, found a spot on the cafeteria floor and sat down. Around the room, I saw several other parents quietly scampering to their seats. As I waited, the children were led into the room. Each class, accompanied by their teacher, sat cross-legged on the floor. Then, each group, one by one, rose to perform their song.

Because the public school system had long stopped referring to the holiday as 'Christmas', I didn't expect anything other than fun, commercial entertainment – songs of reindeer, Santa Claus, snowflakes and good cheer.

So when my son's class rose to sing, "Christmas Love," I was slightly taken aback by its bold title.

Nicholas was aglow, as were all his classmates, adorned in fuzzy mittens, red sweaters and woolly hats.

Those in the front row – centre stage – held up large letters, one by one, to spell out the title of the song.

As the class would sing "C is for Christmas," a child would hold up the letter C. And then "H" for happy, and on and on, until each child holding up his letter had presented the complete message,

"CHRISTMAS LOVE"

8.

The performance was going smoothly until suddenly, we noticed her; a small, quiet girl in the front row holding the letter "M" upside down – totally unaware her letter "M" appeared as a "W".

The audience of primary children snickered at this little one's mistake. But she had no idea that they were laughing at her, so she stood tall, proudly holding her "W".

Although the teachers tried to hush the children, the laughter continued until the last letter was raised, and we all saw it together. A hush came over the audience and eyes began to widen.

In that instant, we understood – the reason we were there, why we celebrated the holiday in the first place, why, even in the chaos there was a purpose for our festivities.

For when the last letter was held high, the message read loud and clear:

"CHRIST WAS LOVE"



And I believe he still is.



The Joy You Give

Somehow, not only for Christmas
but all the long year through.

The joy that you give to others
is the joy that comes back to you.
And the more you spend on blessing
the poor and lonely and sad,
the more of your heart's possessing
returns to you glad.

John Greenleaf Whittier

9.

