

Diary: January

February

1		
2		
3		10.30 Makerstoun
4		
5		
6	10.30 Makerstoun	
7		
8	Bridge Club 7pm	
9	Guild 2.30pm	
10	Session Meeting 7pm	10.30 Stichill
11		
12		Bridge Club 7pm
13	10.30 Stichill	Guild 2.30pm
14		
15	Bridge Club 7pm	
16		
17		10.30 Roxburgh
18		
19		
20	10.30 Roxburgh	
21		
22		
23		
24		10.30 Stichill
25		
26		Bridge Club 7pm
27	10.30 Stichill	
28		
29	Bridge Club 7pm	
30		
31		

Kelso Country Churches



The Country Link

~~~~~January/February, 2019



How did you spend the new year? I spent 31<sup>st</sup> December travelling to Stonehaven and watching the fireballs event. It was quite spectacular. Although I took loads of pictures, none of them really captured what I saw. If you've never been, I could thoroughly recommend it. Nobody really knows how or why the fireballs started but they reckon that originally it was a case of gathering up all the old bits of stuff lying around and setting fire to them before hurling the burning mass into the harbour as a way of cleansing the house, possibly getting rid of the spirits from the old year and letting in the new. However, it started it is certainly a popular event now and quite spectacular.

Less spectacular was the journey home on 1<sup>st</sup> January but it gave me time to think about 2018 and what it had been and what 2019 might bring.

For Kelso Country Churches you may know that we have completed all the preliminary work required so that a congregational meeting can be held on 13<sup>th</sup> January when members and adherents can elect a Nominating Committee. This committee will be charged with finding a sole nominee to present to the congregation in the hope that he or she will be elected and called by you to be your minister. This may not be an easy task as there are a lot of vacant charges in the Church of Scotland at present. However, we can take heart from the fact that our Presbytery has acquired 2 new ministers within less than 13 months. We hope that a third will feel called to apply to Kelso Country Churches.

Our job as a congregation is to provide support for our Nominating Committee and to pray for their work at every opportunity. Although they will be busy, it is not easy for us to see what they do and they cannot tell us about any people who may show an interest in the charge. However, we must have faith in the people we choose and also we must never lose hope that there is a suitable person waiting to be called to our parishes and that God has a plan for us.

I wish you every blessing during 2019

*Helen Howden, Interim Moderator*

## *Parish News and Updates*

Advent is always an extra-busy time for our church families and here are letters of thanks and appreciation which illustrate how vital it is to spread our support and practical help wherever we can.

We have received a letter from Blythswood Care describing the difference that the Christmas shoeboxes make to the recipients:

*‘Mihai Micula has been one of our shoebox distributors in Satu Mare country, northwest Romania, for many years. He describes the village homes in which he left your precious gifts last winter as being some of the poorest in Romania. One family consisting of a widowed mother and three children occupied a shack which lacked windows, electricity and sanitation, and suffered regular floods whenever it rained.*

*Mihai asked Ema, aged 9, what was her favourite item in the box. She immediately picked out the winter hat. “She said it was going to keep her warm in bed at night,” he said. “That really broke my heart. They had no heating in the house and always sleep with their jackets on to avoid freezing,”*

*“We want to thank you for bringing joy into other people’s lives,” his report goes on, “Words cannot express the experience we had when we saw the difference a shoebox can make to these children. Believe me, your support really does transform lives. Without you we would not be able to deliver the practical and personal aid to families like that of little Ema.”*

And that’s not all! Kathy Wilkie knitted over 50 angels before Christmas and sold them raising £112. She donated the money to Blythswood Care to be used for the cost of transporting the shoeboxes across Europe and beyond. Thank you Kathy.

We have received a letter of thanks from Border Women’s Aid for the gifts given at the Carol services:

*On behalf of Border Women’s Aid, I would like to sincerely thank you for the very generous collection of gift-wrapped parcels for women and children. As you know BWA is an established charity providing refuge for women and their children who are affected by domestic abuse. Donations like this at this time of year really make a difference!*

*Please extend our thanks to your members for their continued support.*

*Brenda Evans.*

The Retiring Offering taken at the Carol services raised £188.68 and was given to the local charity, Cheviot Youth.

Website: [kelsolinkedchurchescofs.org](http://kelsolinkedchurchescofs.org)

Scottish charity no. SC000958

### **Kelso Churches Together invite you to Week of Prayer and Christian Unity 21<sup>st</sup> -25<sup>th</sup> January**

This year’s theme is “Only Justice” and has been prepared by Christians in Indonesia.

Meetings will be held mainly at the Quaker Meeting House at 12.45pm for a short reflection followed by soup and rolls.

The rota of churches responsible for leading the meetings is:

Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> - St Mary’s Church

Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> - St. Andrew’s

Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> - Kelso Old and Sprouston. This meeting will be held in Kelso Old Parish Church.

Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> - Kelso North and Ednam

Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> - Friends of the Meeting House.

These meetings are open to all church congregations in and around Kelso. Please join in if you can.

## Some thoughts for the New Year

A challenge to us all:

If every member were just like me

What kind of church would our church be?

If all the others came like you

would there seldom be a vacant pew?

Or would the opposite be true

if all the others came like you?

Then how much giving would our church do

would the bills be paid as they fall due

if all the others gave like you?

If all the others worked like you

then how much service would our church do?

Would the Master's plan be carried through

if all the others worked like you?

*Everyone of us counts:* if we withhold our presence from worship, our interest, our support, our giving, then there is a blank. If tempted to do so, let us say to ourselves:

I am only one but I AM one; I cannot do everything but I can do

SOMETHING; what I can do I OUGHT to do; And what I ought to do, by the grace of God, I WILL do.



Making the possible out of the seemingly impossible:

At the turn of the century there lived in a poor part of Glasgow, a couple loathed and abhorred by their neighbours – drunkards, vile in language and behaviour. But one day they overheard the Salvation Army at work. They joined. Then the husband asked his wife to knit him a jersey for Christmas like the others wore at meetings – with writing on it.

A problem to be overcome. Neither could read or write. But his wife found the answer. She sat at the window of their home and laboriously embroidered on to the jersey the lettering on a notice on the shop window opposite.

It was a triumph! Her husband told her the others said it was the best jersey in Britain!

And the writing? “UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT”

What a marvellous way to start the New Year.

Make the best of everything:

Think the best of everyone:

Hope the best for yourself.

## Preaching Plan for January/February, 2019

### January

6<sup>th</sup> Makerstoun

Rev. Robin McHaffie

13<sup>th</sup> Stichill

Jim Smith

20<sup>th</sup> Roxburgh

Jim Smith

27<sup>th</sup> Stichill

Sophia Duncan

### February

3<sup>rd</sup> Makerstoun

Charles Orr

10<sup>th</sup> Stichill

Rev Marion Dodd

17<sup>th</sup> Roxburgh (last service)

Rev Robert Bruestedt

24<sup>th</sup> Stichill

Rev Robin McHaffie

### March

3<sup>rd</sup> Makerstoun (Communion) Rev Robin McHaffie

All services start at 10.30am unless stated otherwise.

New cleaning and flower rotas will be in Stichill and Makerstoun Churches in January. It is always a privilege to worship in our ancient churches, especially when they look loved and cared for and fresh flowers always enhance the sanctuary, and are appreciated when given to people in our communities who are going through a difficult time.

If you can, please put your name at a date or dates that suit you. Thank you.

One of Charlie Orr's many talents is painting and he is selling beautiful cards of his work for Church funds. £74 has been given so far and some cards are still available in the Church Hall at £2.50 each.

## *Kelso in Kelso Country Churches*

The Advent and Christmas services lived up to our hopes and expectations as we celebrated once again, the wonder of the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ, bringing light and hope to a dark world.

The Worship team had put much thought and preparation into the planning and content of the services to make them relevant and appealing and involving people of all ages.



Smailholm Church looked beautiful, dressed simply with greenery and candelabras for the gift service held on 16<sup>th</sup> December. That same evening, the members of the Worship Team lead a service in Roxburgh Church with modern readings relating the journeys of the people of the Nativity, read by members of that congregation.

A large congregation gathered in Stichill church for the candlelight service of Lessons and Carols. Nita and Rosalind encouraged the children of Kid's Club to take part and they delighted everyone with funny Christmas poems and guitar and piano solos. Unfortunately, Nita and Rosalind were unable to be there so many thanks to Janice Smith and parents who helped. Makerstoun Church was packed with parishioners, families and friends for their Christmas Eve Service. As we had no minister the service started, with a blessing given by Rachel Robertson and then followed with carols, bible readings and poems.

My thanks must go to those who contributed ( with a little bit of arm twisting) namely Duncan Robertson, Tom Arnott, John Mauchlen and Ruth Stewart.

Edward Green told us a story of an American slave called James Patterson who escaped from a tobacco plantation in Southern America to New York and became a leading member of the Abolitionists ending up in Duns and Kelso for some time around 1740. The parishioners there raised funds to buy him his freedom allowing him to return to America a free man – a wonderful story of goodwill and generosity.

Thanks as ever to Isobel Amos for leading the music – and for putting up with me playing the trumpet loudly in her ear during 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing'!

And finally thanks to Lily Fleming and Joan Duncan for the wonderful mulled wine, mince pies and shortbread – a lovely Christmas gathering full of Christmas cheer.

*Kirsty Baird*

## *A Prayer for Epiphany*

Journeying God, who beckons us to join you on the road,  
be with all your people as we set out into a new year.

Give courage to the cautious,  
strength to the weary,  
vision to the short-sighted,  
hope to those who are broken in spirit.

When we are unsure of where you are leading  
and cannot chart our path or progress,  
promote freedom of thought, speech and worship  
Give us trust and a tolerance of not knowing.

When we are certain about the pattern of your mission  
give us humility – and the grace  
to listen and learn from each new situation.

As the wise men brought gifts to the Christchild,  
so may we bring gifts to one another in the world:

**Gold:** may we share material resources justly;  
practice fair-trade; respect the earth  
and exercise mutual deference.

**Frankincense:** may we promote freedom of thought, speech and worship,  
find opportunities for all to grow in grace and stature;  
take quietness with us wherever we go;  
and exercise mutual encouragement.

**Myrrh:** may we stand together with the oppressed and suffering;  
Weep with those who weep; lament the atrocities of history;  
Bring balm for tomorrow  
and exercise mutual love.

Journeying God, help us to follow you, however risky it seems,  
for in you lies our ultimate security; our greatest freedom.

AMEN

Coming to church at Christmas seems to give much pleasure and comfort from the comments we hear and it is a great sadness that it is not carried on to being part of the church family throughout the year, despite the services changing to be relevant and interesting to meet the needs and aspirations of the lives we lead today.

The Shepherd's Life by James Rebanks  
(A Tale of the Lake District)



James Rebanks is a shepherd of Herdwick sheep with a farm in the Matterdale Valley of The Lake District. He is the third generation of Rebanks to look after Herdwick sheep on this piece of land and his family can trace their Lakeland agricultural ancestry back to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.

When he was at school he showed some academic promise in his early years but school was something to be endured and he couldn't wait to leave and work on the land. However, at the age of 21, after his granddad's death, he studied for A levels in evening classes and – to cut a long story short – he graduated from Magdalen College, Oxford University, with a double first in history. He then returned to his homeland to continue with what he always believed to be his true calling of being a Herdwick Shepherd.

The book looks at the life of a shepherd in the Lake District through the four seasons and charts James's remarkable journey from academic no-hoper to success at Oxford and back to the family home where continues to farm Herdwick sheep. He was involved in the bid for the Lake District to receive World Heritage status (which was approved by UNESCO in 2017) and has acted as advisor to the UK government on environmental matters.

*Andrew Nicholson*

*James Rebanks has published two companion books:*

- *The Illustrated Herdwick Shepherd*
- *The Shepherd's View: Modern Photographs from an Ancient Landscape*

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To Make you Smile

I've been to many places, but I've never been to “Kahoots.” Apparently, you can't go alone, you have to be in Kahoots with someone else!

I've also never been “in Cognito.” I hear no one recognises you there. I have however, been “in Sane”. They don't have an airport; you have to be driven there. I have made several trips, thanks mainly to my children, friends, family and work.

I have also been “in Doubt,” but that is a sad place to go, and I try not to visit there too often.

Sometimes, I'm “in Capable,” and I go there more often as I get older.

Favourite Hymns

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love;
Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord;
And where there's doubt, true faith in you.

*O Master, grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console;
To be understood, as to understand;
To be loved as to love with all my soul.*

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope;
Where there is darkness, only light;
And where there's sadness, ever joy.

Make me a channel of your peace.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
In giving to all men that we receive,
And in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Sebastian Temple

This hymn is a versified form of the well-known prayer, traditionally ascribed to St. Francis of Assisi, beginning ‘Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.’

Modern scholars tell us that this is not correct, and it seems that no one knows who wrote the prayer.

But even if it was not actually written by Francis, at least it reflects the humble and compassionate spirit of the great thirteenth century saint. And in the present form, it makes an excellent modern-style hymn.

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**From the Editor's desk**

It has been an anxious time for some families in our parishes these last two months because of illness and bereavement. This can have a debilitating affect on all of us in our small communities and I know that family, friends and neighbours have rallied round - visiting, shopping, sending good wishes and helping where they can.

To all of you who are finding it difficult to regain health and strength, be assured of our continued prayers and good wishes. Spring is not far off now, I hope.

## *A letter from the Session Clerk*

The Church of Scotland along with other denominations throughout Britain face the harsh reality that Christian ethics have changed dramatically over the years and many people no longer attend regular church services – especially the youth of the last few decades. Consequently, one minister per parish ended some time ago and congregations must be more self-reliant on their own resources to survive.



In 2018 we had a stewardship campaign in Smailholm when we visited every house in the parish. We asked questions and left a questionnaire then collected the questionnaires at a later date. From this we ascertained along with other factors, that the people of the parish of Smailholm liked the idea of the church being the focal point of the village and would like it to remain open, but in general

they had no interest in coming to church or helping with the Christian life of the church. The regular attenders, numbered in single figures, wanted the church to remain open of course, but it is not practical with one service every six weeks as has happened recently. It does not help that we have been without a minister for over three years and it could be an uphill struggle to get a minister on three quarters of a full-time equivalent minister's post and stipend.

A stewardship visitation was also done in Roxburgh parish after harvest and this produced the same result as in Smailholm. Roxburgh Church has struggled for many years with poor attendance and it may be that it does not fit the modern way of church life when Kelso is so near and the people of the parish go there for everything else.

Kelso Country Churches cover a wide area in the parishes of Makerstoun, Smailholm, Stichill, Roxburgh, Nenthorn and Hume and this will continue although the number of active churches is reduced. At one time there were eight churches and eight ministers in these parishes.

Smailholm church is now mothballed from the start of this year and Roxburgh Church is going to go the same way from 17<sup>th</sup> February which is the date of their last regular Sunday service. The plan is to mothball them for a period of six months and if things are the same then, I would think there will be a closing down service in the churches to finalise their position. The technical terms of mothballing and closing are that a mothballed church can be re-opened but not a closed down church. Once

the church is closed, the legalities move to the General trustees in Edinburgh and they will look for the best way to dispose of the building. That usually means selling the building for another purpose or trying to get a trust interested in acquiring the property.

For insurance purposes we need to inspect and visit the property once a month, so it is proposed to have a prayer meeting/social gathering at a regular time in the two churches once a month (on different days) probably during the week and anyone who wishes may attend. While the churches are mothballed or closed, we can still use them to hold special services such as weddings, funerals, baptisms or any occasion deemed special, until they are disposed of.



It is sad to see the demise of these historic religious buildings in the heart of these small rural villages but we cannot continue in the same way with just under 180 members between all the parishes and it does not make sense to keep all the churches open. The Church of Scotland is looking at enforced reductions in ministry as well as buildings over the next few years and there will be enforced measures on congregations which do not comply.

The two parishes are still members of Kelso Country Churches and will continue to have their dedicated elders and are most welcome to come to the other two churches in the group – Stichill and Makerstoun. This decision has taken a long time to come to fruition, and not one we have taken lightly, because these churches are loved and have long-held family connections, but churches are buildings which need people to put life and heart into them.

God works in mysterious ways so let us keep praying. Who knows what is in store for these buildings – only good things, we hope.

*Jim Smith, Session clerk to Kelso Country Churches*

*Smailholm Kirk:* the final service took place on the last Sunday of 2018 led by Charlie Orr who, despite completing a transatlantic flight the day before, gave an inspiring sermon. John Logan gave a speech noting the significance of the day in the life of Smailholm parish and assured everyone of a warm welcome in our other two churches as we are all an integral part of Kelso Country Churches. Pictures were taken and refreshments were enjoyed at the close of the service.

