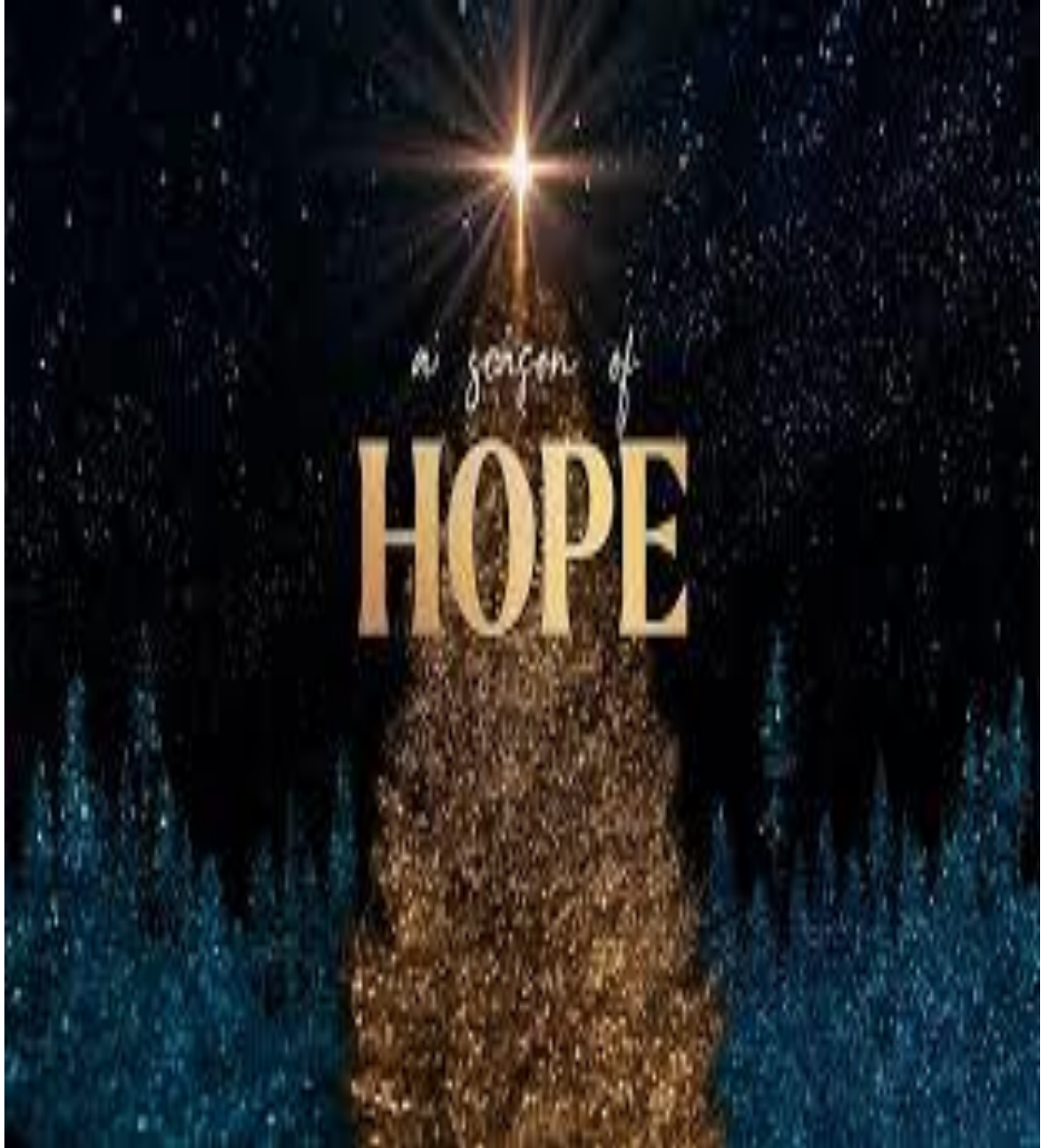


EMCOUNTER

The Magazine of Inverurie West
Parish Church

DECEMBER/JANUARY 2024/25



Scottish Charity SC016907

REFLECTION

*There's a song in the air! There's a star in the sky!
There's a mother's deep prayer and a Baby's low cry!
And the star rains its fire while the beautiful sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!*

*There's a tumult of joy o'er the wonderful birth,
For the virgin's sweet Boy is the Lord of the earth.
Ay! the star rains its fire while the beautiful sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!*

*In the light of that star lie the ages impearled;
And that song from afar has swept over the world.
Every hearth is aflame, and the beautiful sing
In the homes of the nations that Jesus is King!*

*We rejoice in the light, and we echo the song
That comes down through the night from the heavenly throng.
Ay! we shout to the lovely evangel they bring,
And we greet in His cradle our Savior and King!*

The text of the reflection is by
Josiah G. Holland and was set to
music by Dr John Hearne.

Click on the image to hear
Cadenza perform Dr John
Hearne's entry to the *Sing a New
Song* Christmas carol writing
competition which was the winner
of the Caledonian Hilton Audience
prize.



From the West Manse

Sitting down to write this letter before heading off for a pre-Advent week of annual leave, I wondered whether I was feeling Christmassy enough yet for a festive message.



And then it happened.

The fact that we have pre-loved Christmas baubles for sale at the centre (do drop by and see if there is anything you like) and that there are already real Christmas trees in the supermarkets wasn't what did it. I love a real Christmas tree but how on earth do you keep one alive until Christmas if you buy it in mid-November? Beginning work on school assemblies, and the pop-up nativity, and this festive edition of the magazine has helped, but that wasn't quite it either.

No, what made me feel Christmassy was the fact that as I looked out of the window it began to snow. You can take the girl out of Canada ...

Snow at the moment is actually not terribly convenient for me. It might interfere with my travel plans for one thing. And so I'm grateful, and hopeful, that this particular snowfall will be no more than a light dusting. But, oh, it does look pretty. And more than that, it looks Christmassy.

Of course a snowy nativity is unlikely to be historically accurate (although at 2,400 feet above sea level, Bethlehem does get a bit of snow from time to time). If it *did* snow on Mary and Joseph's journey, I expect it didn't inspire them with cosy, nostalgic feelings. Instead, Joseph probably worried that Mary wasn't warm enough and Mary might have wondered whether it was the pregnancy or the snow that was making her feel so tired.

But what feels “Christmassy” to us now, is often whatever brings back memories of childhood Christmases; those sights, sounds, smells, textures, tastes, activities, or weather patterns that evoke sensory memories of a time when perhaps life felt less complicated, or it felt entirely natural to be hopeful about what Santa would leave under the tree, or what the future of the world might be.

Is it quite so ‘natural’ to be hopeful in adulthood? Some would say it is unnatural. Science certainly suggests that humans are wired to respond strongly to danger. Maybe fear is more ‘natural’ than hope. But I think hope is one of the things that differentiates us from most other animals. Hope is not mere optimism. Hope doesn’t just believe that things will work out in some vague unspecified way. Hope looks reality in the eye and yet still manages to give us the confidence to move forward.

As a Christian, I believe that hope isn’t just a human attitude, it is a gift. Every year, at Christmas, we celebrate the rebirth of hope into the world. And every New Year we remember that darkness always turns again to light. As the angels said to the shepherds, “*Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.*” (Luke 2: 10-11)

Snow may make me feel nostalgic at Christmas, but what makes me hopeful is that, in spite of everything, and even in an increasingly secular western world, people can still hear about Jesus every year. Whether it’s a snowy Nativity scene on a card from their one ‘religious’ friend, or the sound of ‘*O Little town of Bethlehem*’ or ‘*In the Deep Midwinter*’ giving them an unexpected rush of feeling; our Christian hope, like our saviour, is still alive and active in the world today.

We are the people of hope. Let’s spread that gift this Christmas.

Every blessing Rhona



Acorn Centre Update

Our latest offering has been really productive, with the Saver Menu helping to bring in new customers whilst being careful to balance the choice for those looking for a treat. With that in mind we will continue this through into our Festive menu launching 2nd December. The snow hit our sales in November, so it would be great if you could come and support us this month to help us over the line to meeting the end of year target!

The Big Christmas Quiz

My fiendish mind has been concocting more cryptic clues, so if you need to give the old grey matter a workout over the holiday then pick up a copy at the Centre reception.

Seven Festive food tips for reducing waste this season

1. Plan ahead. Make a meal plan and base your shopping list around this. This will help to save money and waste.
2. Prepare in advance. For the big meal do as much preparation in advance and don't forget to include your houseguests and the rest of the family in the task. Peeling tatties and scoring sprouts can be fun if you have someone to have a natter with.
3. Check cooking times and write a timetable so you know what has to go in when. This is the hardest part of producing any meal so it's time well spent.
4. Plate meals. Family or buffet service can be easier, but people's eyes are usually bigger than their bellies. Plate the first serving, folk can always go up for seconds.

5. Food Safety: First cook to 75'c and reheat to 85'c. Always cool food as quickly as you can and refrigerate once it is around room temperature. A food temperature probe is invaluable at this time of year.

6. Use those leftovers!
Turkey or chicken carcass can be boiled for stock and makes the base for a great soup. Fry off a diced onion, dice some carrots and a neep and add soaked and rinsed broth mix or red lentils and you have a great meal for pennies.



7. Remember - the shops are only closed for ONE DAY!! Don't over-cram your fridge and freezers as they'll work less efficiently. Go back to step one and plan ahead.

Thank you - Finally a big thank you to all our customers, staff and most importantly **our fabulous volunteers** for supporting us throughout the year. We look forward to new adventures, welcoming new customers and continuing our mission to provide true hospitality to our community.

Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year! Mike



THE GUILD

Date for your diary:

Monday 9 December

Christmas Celebration with Chris Gardner and friends

FIVE FINGER PRAYER

If you ever struggle to think of how to pray for others, I recently came across this guide - The Five Finger Prayer - which might help.

When your hands are together....

1. The Thumb is nearest, so begin by praying for those nearest to you - loved ones friends and family.
2. The Index finger is the pointer. Pray for those who teach - bible teachers, school teachers and others in similar situations.
3. Next is the tallest. Remember to pray for those in charge - church leaders, head teachers, local and government leaders.
4. The fourth is the weakest. Pray for who are in trouble or need help.
5. Finally, the little finger. Remember your smallness compared to God's greatness. Ask Him to meet all these needs.



I hope this is helpful, so just talk to your Father. He wants to hear from you.

God's Blessings.

Linda.

The Prayer Group.

UBUNTU UPDATE

Thank you to everyone who supported the Christmas preview evening on 4 November which was an opportunity for some early Christmas shopping with fairly traded hospitality.



The shop is well stocked with lots of gift ideas for Christmas, including:



These finger puppets are sourced from CIAP (Central Interregional Artisans of Peru), a Fair Trade export organisation which is made up of 20 artisan cooperatives benefiting over 2,000 people. The knitting is done by women living in rural areas, helping communities stay together.

The bamboo in these socks is processed into yarn in Rajasthan, India then transported and made into socks in Tamil Nadu. 17 workers are employed and they earn about 48% above the minimum wage. They follow clear fair trade principles in their production, do not have any child labour and the staff are valued and included in decision-making processes.





Choosing a fairly traded gift helps ensure that the workers who produced them are paid a fair living wage, are not facing dangerous working conditions, and are working consensually. Giving a

fairly traded gift means you are helping someone in the world provide for their own family and work towards a better future. It also is an opportunity to share great ethically-sourced products with friends and families and promote the idea of gift-giving with a purpose.



A REMINDER ...

GRAMPIAN HOSPITALS' CHRISTMAS CAROL CONCERT
CONDUCTOR: TIM TRICKER

FEATURING
THE GRAMPIAN HOSPITALS' CHRISTMAS CHOIR
CONCORDIA STRING ORCHESTRA
BON ACCORD BRASS QUINTET

AND IN THE FOYER PRECONCERT
ABERDEEN CITY SENIOR STRING QUARTET

SUN 15 DECEMBER 2024
2:30PM
ABERDEEN MUSIC HALL

Adults £20 | Children £15
Under 12s free

TICKETS AVAILABLE IN 2024

YOUNG LIVES vs CANCER

NB Tickets are available from the Music Hall or online through Aberdeen Performing Arts.

ADVENT EVENING

The annual Advent Evening will be on **Friday 6th December** at the Acorn Centre. We start at **6.30 pm** with tea and mince pies, then move onto discussing our theme, which this year is "Give Me Shelter!" Mary & Joseph sought shelter for the birth of their child, but many in our society seek shelter, too. A thoughtful evening for Advent, and we hope a few people will join us.



*West Church
Education Team
Advent Event*

Give me Shelter!!

**Friday 6th
December
Acorn Centre**

**Come along at
6.30 pm for
Tea and Pies
Discussion starts at 7.00pm**

Christian Aid Christmas Card Delivery Service 2024



Look out for the post boxes appearing in locations around the town for people to post their local cards from **7th December** until the last posting date of **16th December**.



In addition to the Acorn Centre, St Andrew's Church, Morrisons, Tesco, Strachan's and J.G. Ross at Highclere, we have a new location this year **at the Garden Centre**. Please check you are not including any cards for anywhere further afield than Inverurie, Port Elphinstone, or Osprey Village, and if you could make sure that addresses are as complete as possible, we always appreciate it! The minimum donation requested per card is 50p. All funds raised go to Christian Aid.



This is a service that relies heavily on a lot of volunteers to make it work. We are always on the look-out for ne volunteers to help deliver the cards, and if you would like to get involved we would do our best to

match you to a street or two close to your home. Only one delivery is made, once all the cards have been sorted, so it is not very time-consuming, and you can choose a time that suits you. If you are interested in delivering, or sorting the cards at St Andrew's Church, please ring either **Sheila Rennie** on 01467 623156 or **Alison Young** on 07790 97693. We would be delighted if you would join us!

Christmas Instant Nativities - or Instant Calamities? (Reflections of fraught teachers.)

Christmas traditions are, generally, joyful - carol concerts, carol singing in the community, candlelit services - and for parents of young children, the annual Nativity play. Unfortunately this event - "*The Mary and Joseph Play*" - can be fraught with danger, especially with regard to costumes and casting.



Costuming can result in a flurry of Social Media posts – ‘*Mumsnet*’ is awash with desperate pleas for help:

- *I can't make her angel wings stay up!*
- *The head of his camel has just fallen off ...*
- *How do you make a costume for a mince pie? (!!)*

Casting is the most dangerous area for a teacher. Given that there can be only one Mary, one Joseph, one Innkeeper and generally, three Wise Men, what does she/he do with the rest of the class? Some ideas are inventive, some are wacky. One child, when asked to come dressed as an animal, appeared in black velvet: he was a spider (which was perhaps realistic for a stable?); one flew in as a bat; another crawled in as a crab. Perhaps you recall the child character in "*Love Actually*"? She was designated to be a lobster!

Our own Margaret Sangster has direct experience of these situations. She was tasked with preparing the Nativity with four



infant classes, ages 5 to 8, totalling over 120 children! So, in addition to the main characters, there were 40 shepherds, 40 angels and - 40 drummers! Being Margaret, she *made* all the angels' wings, then created 40 flat-top



drummers' hats, 40 drums (cardboard with braid around the neck), and procured 40 sets of chopsticks! The best part for the children, said they, was getting to keep the drums!



Never mind, manic preparations completed, isn't it lovely when the assembled audience of parents and admirers gather to appreciate and applaud all the effort, and join the children in singing:

"The cattle are glowing....."

A Child's View of Christmas

Sometimes it is said that "*Christmas is really about the children*", but what do children **really** think of Christmas?

Here are a few reflections from them.

Nicola: *Christ came to earth to teach us to believe in God and not to be naughty.*

Joanne: *I like Christmas because it is Jesus' birthday. He has the birthday and we get the presents.*

Mark: *Really it is one big birthday party for Jesus but as he is not here to give him presents we give them to the people we love instead.*

Katie: wrote a lovely poem:

My Wish for you

*I wish you joy
Love with your friends,
Happiness in your work,
Fortune with your salary,
Pleasure in your walks,
Well-being in your dwelling,
Health in your body,
Beauty in yourself,
Delight in all,
Kindness from your friends,
Excellence in all you do,
Courage to do all well,
Determination to get things right,
And tender love from all.*



Extracts from *A Child's View of Christmas* by R. and E. Exley, Exley Publications Ltd.



Material compiled by
Margaret Hearne





Advent and Christmas Events at the West

Sun 1st Dec 2-5 pm "Lights on at the West"
Festive craft activities and fine pieces

Fri 6th Dec 6.30 pm Advent reflection &
mince pies *led by our Christian Education team*

Sun 8th Dec 3 pm 'Hope and Light' quiet seasonal
service. *A chance to find some peace
at a difficult time*

Fri 20th Dec 7 pm IDCT family carol service

Sun 22nd Dec 11 am All-age 'Pop-up Nativity' service
Come in costume, or come as you are!

Tue 24th Dec 4 pm IDCT 'Christingle' service
at St Andrew's

Tue 24th Dec 11.30 pm Joint Watchnight service
at St Andrew's *(Carol singing from 11 pm)*

Wed 25th Dec 10 am Joint Christmas Day family
worship

Church Calendar/Ways of connecting December 2024 -January 2025

Sunday services continue at the usual time of 11 am with some variation for seasonal services. If you are worshipping from home, you can connect as usual via the West church website and YouTube channels .



December

- | | | |
|--------------|---------|---|
| Sun 1 Dec | 11 am | Advent morning worship.
Hospitality time after the service.

2-5 pm 'Lights on at the West' .
Festive craft activities and fine pieces. |
| Wed 4-18 Dec | 7.30 pm | Zoom Advent bible study.
All welcome. Contact Rhona for the link
r.cathcart@inveruriewestchurch.org |
| Fri 6 Dec | 6.30 pm | Advent reflection and mince pies.
Led by the Christian Education team. |
| Sun 8 Dec | 11 am | Advent morning worship.
Hospitality time after the service. |
| | 3 pm | "Hope and Light" quiet seasonal service. |
| Sun 15 Dec | 11 am | Advent morning worship.
Hospitality time after the service. |

- Fri 20 Dec 7 pm IDCT family carol service.
- Sun 22 Dec 11 am Advent morning worship with Pop-up Nativity.
- Tue 24 Dec 4 pm IDCT Christingle service at St Andrew's.
- 11.30 pm Joint Watchnight service at St Andrew's (Carol singing from 11 pm).
- Wed 25 Dec 10 am Joint Christmas Day family worship at the West.
- Sun 29 Dec 11 am Joint worship at the West.

January

- Sun 5 Jan 11 am Morning worship.
Hospitality time after the service.
- Sun 12 Jan 11 am Morning worship.
Hospitality time after the service.
- Sun 19 Jan 11 am Morning worship.
Hospitality time after the service.
- Sun 26 Jan 11 am Morning worship
followed by informal communion.

Encounter If you have any material for Encounter email:
encounter@inveruriwestchurch.org by Wed 22 January

Children are welcome at all services. Most weeks we offer Junior Church for children who wish to go downstairs partway through the service. Activities and toys can also be found in our 'play as you worship' box in the sanctuary.

The prayer group continues to meet regularly on a Thursday morning. Prayer requests can be sent to olive.duncan@hotmail.co.uk or duncan.linda1@btinternet.com



CHRISTIAN AID CHARITY GIFTS



Start your Christmas shopping with a difference. Gifts that make the impossible possible. Fancy sending a pair of chickens or sending a child to school? These are just two of the gifts in the Christian Aid Charity gifts.



To find out more and shop now click the link below:




Reverse Advent Calendar

Please check our website for Christmas opening times, and to see what we may be running short of. Thank you!

1 Tinned soup	2 Shampoo	3 Variety tins or boxes	4 Tinned tomatoes	5 Rice	6 Deodorant
7 Box of biscuits or chocolates	8 Chocolate and confectionery	9 Tinned fish	10 Coffee	11 Jam	12 Breakfast cereal
13 Tinned pudding	14 Chocolate bars	15 Long-life fruit juice	16 Instant mash potatoes	17 Tinned vegetables	18 Cooking sauces
19 Tinned potatoes	20 Tinned meat	21 Toilet rolls	22 Rice pudding	23 UHT long-life milk	24 Tinned fruit

aberdeenshirenorth.foodbank.org.uk

Registered Charity in Scotland (200001)

The Aberdeenshire North Food Bank is again asking for support in the form of donations as suggested in the Reverse Advent Calendar. Bring your donations to foodbank donation collection points or contact info@aberdeenshirenorthfoodbank.org.uk to arrange a drop off.

**Henry Wadsworth
Longfellow**

This is a poem in response to violence at Christmas time and reflecting the contradiction between the Christmas message of Peace and ongoing conflict. .

*I heard the bells on Christmas
Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to
men!*

*And thought how, as the day
had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to
men!*

*Till ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night
to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to
men!*

*Then from each black, accursed
mouth
The cannon thundered in the
South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to
men!*

*It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a
continent,
And made forlorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good-will to
men!*

*And in despair I bowed my
head;
'There is no peace on earth,' I
said;
'For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to
men!'*

*Then pealed the bells more loud
and deep:
'God is not dead, nor doth He
sleep;
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will
to men.'*

At this time of the year there is a focus on delivering the angels' message of peace and goodwill to all men. It is appropriate therefore to think of the dreadful situation in the Middle East and join in praying for those caught up in the violence.



A PRAYER IN RESPONSE TO THE ESCALATING VIOLENCE

Loving God,

In the midst of this escalation of war and violence in the Middle East, we turn our eyes to you.

We mourn and weep with those whose lives have been affected.

We pray for an end to this cycle of violence and ask you to bring peace and healing. We pray that you would comfort those who mourn and be close to the broken-hearted.

We pray for our partners across the Middle East. We thank you for their work and witness. We pray that you would comfort them and that your presence would be their strength as they continue to serve those in need. We pray for your protection for them.

We pray for the political and religious leaders who have influence over this situation. Would you give them the courage and boldness needed to pursue peace and justice. We pray that they would see the value of every human life and they would work to protect it. We pray that those who have led us down this path of war would repent and turn from their ways.

In these dark days we pray for your light to shine.

In the name of the Prince of Peace, your son, Jesus Christ.

Amen

From: <https://embraceme.org/our-prayers/israel-palestine-urgent-prayer-for-peace>

WHO'S WHO AT THE WEST

Minister	Rev Rhona Cathcart r.cathcart@inveruriwestchurch.org	620285
Session Clerks	Mark and Gillian Paterson sessionclerk@inveruriwestchurch.org	625675
Church and Acorn Centre Administration	Judith Will admin@inveruriwestchurch.org	670850
Church Officer	A team approach will be implemented.	
Rollkeeper	Chris Gardner rollkeeper@inveruriwestchurch.org	07791 630495
Life & Work	Irene Jamieson irenejamieson@live.co.uk	
Safeguarding Co-ordinators	Valerie Napier Gail Buchan	623279 622145
Transport Co-ordinator	Linda Mathers	622586
Acorn Centre Management Team	Laura Gray lauragray25@btinternet.com	620658
Environmental Matters Team	Joy Doorghen doorghens@hotmail.com	620823
Fabric Team	Jim Lyle jimlyle@hotmail.co.uk	624159
Finance Team	Alan Sharp sharp3@btinternet.com	
Treasurer	Alison Blair treasurer@inveruriwestchurch.org	620677
Committed Giving Envelopes	Cindy Farquhar Cindyfarquhar25@yahoo.com	
Gift Aid	Mandy Aitken mandyaitken@sky.com	07532 487788
Junior Church Team	Biff Barrow biff.barrow@tiscali.co.uk	623096
Pastoral Care Team	Rev Rhona Cathcart r.cathcart@inveruriwestchurch.org	620285
Social/Fundraising Team	Joyce Petrie joycepetrie21@hotmail.com	620932

CONGREGATIONAL ROLL

Certificate of Transference:

Mrs Annabel Gordon to Sherbrooke Mossspark Parish Church

Change of Address:

Mr Frank Cockbill (District 23a) to (District 26)

Please advise the Roll Keeper of any change of address:
rollkeeper@inveruriewestchurch.org

FLOWER CALENDAR – DECEMBER

CONVENER - JOAN FELTHAM

Dec 1st Margaret Gill

Dec 8th Alison and Alan Sharp

Dec 15th -

Dec 22nd Joan Feltham

Dec 29th Laura and Kenneth Gray



ENCOUNTER ONLINE – Currently we are producing and distributing Encounter online and in print. If you have not already provided details of your e-mail and would like to ensure you receive the online version, please contact the Session Clerk (**01467 625675**).



WINTER - A SAVING GRACE!

*As Christmas passes, we enter the month of January with its dark days and long nights. However, **Walter de la Mare** reminds us that often we can find joy in viewing a white moon, floating ...*

WINTER

*Clouded with snow
The cold winds blow,
And shrill on leafless bough
The robin with its burning breast
Alone sings now.*

*The rayless sun,
Day's journey's done,
Sheds its last ebbing light
On fields in leagues of beauty spread
Unearthly white.*

*Thick draws the dark,
And spark by spark,
The frost fires kindle, and soon,
Over that sea of frozen foam
Floats the white moon.*



**THE ENCOUNTER TEAM WOULD LIKE TO
THANK ALL WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO
THE MAGAZINE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.**

**WISHING YOU ALL A PEACEFUL CHRISTMAS AND A
HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR**

