



The  
Parish  
of  
Livingston Old



Christmas  
2024



## **And So It Began....**



In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrolment when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judaea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to his first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear.

And the Angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign for you; you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased."

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing which has happened, which the Lord hath made known unto us."

And they went with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.

But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it was told to them.

*Luke Ch.2, vs. 1 – 20*



### **A NOTE FROM THE MANSE**

Autumn is one of my favourite seasons as the harvest is brought in and the leaves on trees change colours from green to vibrant shades of orange, gold, red, brown. I love it when walking or driving along and seeing the various colours dazzling from the trees canopy. Yet, as days go by, as I look out the window I see less and less leaves on the trees and more and more leaves on the ground. Soon the trees will be bare as nature prepares to enter hibernation when the landscape will appear lifeless.

Catherine McNeil, an American writer, reflects on the fact that there is spiritual value to be found in every season of life, including seasons of dormancy. She says that *"In nature, nothing is wasted. Fruits and vegetables may be harvested to provide life for another creature but even if left to rot on the vine or in the field, they will fall and feed the soil, the worms and fungus recycling them back into the ground, readying them to spring forth into new life. Nothing is ever wasted or destroyed: only transformed. If this is the way God acts throughout creation, mightn't we expect him to work this way in our spirits as well? All our efforts, disappointments, victories, and failures - in his Kingdom, nothing is wasted. He is taking it all, shaping it, forming us, steadfastly working toward his own harvest festival in a world made new. Our Gardener can cultivate gratitude in me, even - perhaps especially - in the seasons I try to push away. For it is when I need him most that I remember to seek him . . . and find him. Is this why he exhorts us to rejoice, 'in all circumstances?' ... Because he is always, always, making things new."* (Catherine McNeil from *All Shall Be Well: Awakening to God's Presence in this Messy, Abundant World.*)

As we face challenges in our church and our own lives and, sometimes, might feel devoid of energy and lifeless, we need to remember that God can birth new life into us. This Advent time let us seek to get closer to God, as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us.

*Netu*



# Parish Register

## DEATHS

Anna Hislop

Jessie Mackichan

Nancy Alexander

Tam McLaren



## The "U" in JesUs

Before "U" were thought of or time had begun  
God had stuck "U" in the name of his son.  
And each time "U" pray you'll see it is true  
You cannot spell out JesUs and not include "U"

You're a pretty big part of his wonderful name  
For "U" he was born; that's why he came  
And his great love for "U" is the reason that he died  
It even takes "U" to spell crucified

Isn't it thrilling and splendidly grand  
He rose from the dead with "U" in his plan  
The stones split away, the gold trumpet blew  
And this word resurrection is spelled with a "U"

When JesUs left the Earth at his upward ascension,  
He felt there was one thing he Just had to mention  
"Go into the world and tell them it's true,  
That I love them all ...Just like I love U!"

So many great people are spelled with a "U"  
Don't they have the right to know Jesus too?  
It an depends now on what "U" will do,  
He'd like them to know, but it all starts with "U"

Will "U" PASS IT ON? JES"U"S LOVES "U"

*Unknown. Submitted by Hugh McFarlane*



# CHURCH CALENDAR

## EVERY SUNDAY

9.45am WORSHIP (Village Kirk) 11.15am WORSHIP (St Andrew's)  
12.30 – 1.30 Soup Lunch, St Andrew's, Every last Sunday of the month

## EVERY SECOND MONDAY

11.00 am -12.30 pm The Guild at St Andrew's

## EVERY TUESDAY

10 am -12 pm Craft Group at the Village Kirk

## EVERY WEDNESDAY

10.00 am – 1.00 pm Preloved Clothes (Charity shop) at St Andrew's  
10.00 am – 1.30 pm Café/soup at St Andrew's – soup served from 11.30am to 1.00pm  
6.30 pm – 8.30 pm Art club for kids 9 years and over at St Andrew's

## EVERY THURSDAY

10.30 am – 12 pm Coffee Morning at Village Kirk  
2 pm – 4 pm Craft Group at St Andrew's

## EVERY FRIDAY

2 om – 3.30 pm Friday Club & Cooking Session at St Andrew's



# CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR SERVICES 2024

| Date                 | Time  | Event   | Venue        |
|----------------------|-------|---|--------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Dec  | 09:45 | Holy Communion  | Village Kirk |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Dec  | 11:15 | Holy Communion  | St Andrew's  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Dec  | 15:00 | Time To Remember  | St Andrew's  |
| 8 <sup>th</sup> Dec  | 09:45 | Gift Service  | Village Kirk |
| 8 <sup>th</sup> Dec  | 11:15 | Gift Service  | St Andrew's  |
| 15 <sup>th</sup> Dec | 10:30 | Joint Nativity Service                                  | St Andrew's  |
| 22 <sup>nd</sup> Dec | 10:30 | Joint Carols & Lessons                                  | Village Kirk |
| 24 <sup>th</sup> Dec | 18:00 | Christingle Service                                     | St Andrew's  |
| 24 <sup>th</sup> Dec | 23:30 | Watchnight Service                                      | Village Kirk |
| 24 <sup>th</sup> Dec | 23:30 | Watchnight Service                                      | St Andrew's  |
| 25 <sup>th</sup> Dec | 10:45 | Joint Christmas Day<br><b>Service followed by lunch</b> | St Andrew's  |
| 29 <sup>th</sup> Dec | 10:30 | Joint Service   | Village Kirk |





## MONEY MATTERS



With the help of Jack Pyper, who for now is our Treasurer, we are slowly getting our accounts under control. We are grateful to him for his support and help. Offerings until the end of September amount to £46,269: a decrease of £1,294 compared to last year. Our expenditure this year will exceed by some distance our income, which is a concern to us. To be able to meet our commitments and payments we need all our members to give regularly and generously.

Giving can be made in a number of ways:

- by direct debit or standing order directly into the church bank account: Livingston Old Parish Church: Sort code: 80-08-80 Account number: 00506601
- by offering envelopes (please asked one of the elders or the minister for an envelope)
- online through Stewardship website, or the QR code displayed in the church and printed below.

If you pay tax and have not signed a Gift Aid Declaration, please consider doing this. This will increase your offering by 25% as the church is able to reclaim the tax you have already paid on this money.

Many thanks to all of you who give regularly and support the work of the church in many other ways.

*Finance group*

***NB. A Gift Aid Declaration Form will be found at the back of this Newsletter.***

## SCAN AND GIVE

Anyone wishing to make a donation to Livingston Old Parish Church with their smart phone will be very welcome to do so by scanning the QR code:





## **WHOSE WE ARE AND WHOM WE SERVE**

This will probably be our last Newsletter as a member of the Livingston branch of the Church of Scotland Guild.

We feel our numbers have depleted so much over the years, we would find it hard to offer speakers an audience of great numbers and we cannot manage fund-raisers for the Guild Projects with so few able members and so we have decided to call it a day.

We do still plan to continue as a Fellowship group and meet as usual on a Monday afternoon at 1.45pm in St Andrews, fortnightly. as we will always be “*Whose We Are and Whom We Serve*”. Any money we have will be forwarded to the church and the Guild.

Best Wishes

***Jean Finch***

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## **FAITH**

On three Sundays at the end of October and beginning of November this year, we read from Hebrews 11 and 12 and reflected on faith and heroes of faith. I would like to share with you an inspirational piece I came across by David Steindl-Rast, a Benedictine brother.

*Now I come to something which may at first sight seem specifically Christian – or Biblical, I should rather say. But when you listen very carefully, you will see that we speak about a reality which is quite universal: faith. Faith and the path are inseparable from one another. Faith is that dynamism of going on the path. Faith is what makes it possible for you to go on.*

*Now, you see immediately that Faith in this sense must mean something other than believing something. Faith includes believing in something because life includes believing something. But the emphasis on believing something, which we have connected with faith in recent Christian tradition is lopsided, even dangerous, because in the full concept, faith is not primarily believing something but is primarily trusting someone. Faith is not giving your signature to a list of beliefs and dogmas. That will come in eventually – but what faith is, from the very start, is courageous trust. It may start simply with trust in life and eventually open its way toward trust in the Source of all life.*

**Br. David Steindl-Rast - contributed by our Minister.**

## **SOUP SUNDAYS**



Our Church holds Soup Sundays in St Andrews on the last Sunday of most months, after the morning service, from 12.15pm.

Everyone is welcome to join us for a light lunch of soup and bread, tea or coffee and biscuits. The soups are all vegetarian and made in house by our team on the day and at the Community Café on Wednesdays. We also cater for the youngsters amongst us with some alternatives.

The soups vary from traditional to interesting and adventurous. Never be afraid to ask for a trial tasting that might tempt your taste buds into new territory!

This is a lovely chance to meet and chat with familiar and new faces. We welcome parishioners and members of the wider community from the town. As the Winter draws in it can provide a warm space for everyone who might benefit from it.

*The Soup Sunday kitchen has some regular staffing as well as a host of willing volunteers who cook, serve and clear up but they cannot all commit to every event so we invite anyone who feels they might like to contribute their time and talents to consider joining us.*

*Please speak to Lesley Balaj or Carolyn Nicol if you have any questions*



## **LIVINGSTON VILLAGE KIRK COFFEE MORNING**

**Every Thursday Morning from 10.30 - 12.**



Now that the days are shorter and sometimes a bit dreich, if you feel in need of some company why not join us at our coffee morning?

We have a good cross-section of both men and women who offer plenty of chat and lots of laughter.

All new folks will be very welcome and we look forward to seeing them join us.

*Grace Millward*



## **AWAY DAY**

On Saturday 21st September, twenty-five members of the Kirk Session and friends met at 'Howden Park Centre where we enjoyed a time of fellowship and learning. Lesley Lawrie, Nelu and Jeanette led our opening sessions where we were challenged to think about how best we could be the church in Livingston and beyond. We focussed on the first two marks of mission produced by the Church of Scotland.

- 1 To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.
- 2 To teach, baptise and nurture new believers.

After a tasty buffet lunch we broke into small groups to discuss how we could try to live out these and the other marks of mission.

- 3 To respond to human needs by loving service
- 4 transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
- 5 To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

As a community of believers, we are regularly receiving the Good News of Jesus Christ and we are called to respond to His gracious invitation to change and grow as we repent and keep learning how to live, forgiving rather than retaliating, and honouring rather than hating. Flowing from our relationship with Jesus we serve others with loving kindness in many ordinary ways. When we serve our community, we can participate in a small part of God's great work of transformation and treasure all God's gifts.

This was a very happy and worthwhile day together, which finished with a short Service of Communion. All of us felt encouraged and challenged to go away and see how best we could play our part and we look forward to further days of fellowship with the whole congregation.

*Sadie Elliott*



## **30 Years of Fairtrade in the UK**



It's been three decades since the first Certified products hit supermarket shelves. Since then, fairtrade not only pioneered a more equitable way of doing trade but have also become the world's most recognised and trusted ethical label.

But the work is far from over. Get involved—because together, we can be the change to make trade fairer.

Please try and put at least one fairtrade item in your shopping basket each week to ensure that we are giving a wonderful loving Christmas gift to the vulnerable.

*Lesley Balaj*

# MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT

## **Macmillan Coffee Morning.**

I would like to thank everyone for their continuous attendance and support for the recent fundraising MacMillan Coffee Morning in the Village Kirk. Your generosity has helped raise this year's total which is £950.

I am more than thankful for the help that I have in making this a very successful fundraising event. The bakers for all their delicious home baking, all who donated gifts for the raffle and also all the help and assistance setting up tables etc, serving tea/coffee, selling raffle tickets, washing dishes; I couldn't do it on my own.

Thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

*Irene Gallacher*





## A WINTER JOURNEY - WITH A DIFFERENCE



Making journeys in the winter or reading about the travels of others at the chillier times of the year, has always exercised a strange fascination for me. Actually, driving for long distances in snow and following in the ski tracks of travellers north of the Arctic Circle is a wonderful experience. When I lived in Sweden, back in the 60s, I had plenty of both but here, in our Winter 2024 Newsletter. I would like to contemplate a journey in a country that we rarely consider as being wintry.

As readers will have guessed, I am thinking about the travels, in what is now December, of Mary and Joseph and their donkey. The story in the Bible tells us that they lived in Nazareth in the Province of Galilee and they were travelling to Bethlehem in Judea. The purpose of going there was that they were to be taxed. Almost certainly, a Census was also being carried out. This would be carried out by the Roman occupiers of the country or by the administration of Judea that was performed by the local king who discharged many government functions on behalf of the Romans. Nazareth to Bethlehem was roughly a hundred miles and so, you may ask, why had they to travel all that way in the cold weather?

It was the system that the taxation and census were carried out on a family basis. Joseph belonged to the family of King David, known as the Shepherd King, because this area is known for its traditional sheep rearing. *"And in the fields shepherds tended their flocks"*, indicating that shepherding was still being carried on around Bethlehem, long after the days of King David.

Coming down to Bethlehem from Nazareth in those days of a bit over two thousand years ago, just as today, required passage from Galilee through Samaria, the land of the Samaritans and down into Judea. All of this was rugged and rocky country, with here and there, a watering place centred on an oasis; the main feature of which was a well. This would be above and fed by an artesian basin: either an underground river or lake. Our Family would be dependent for their water and provender for themselves and their donkey. A stony road to be sure but well maintained during the Roman occupation, who needed it to enable them to move their troops and wagons quickly. There would also be watch towers at frequent intervals. The occupying forces had horses of their own and so we can expect these oases to be equipped with farrier's workshops which could shoe animals when required. The donkey would also be a customer; though perhaps a non-too willing one.

On a journey occupying perhaps ten days, overnight stops would also be catered for at the oases. We are familiar with the predicament of Mary and Joseph when they got to Bethlehem and were unable to secure lodgings. The Bible tells us that no room was available at the inn but what kind of place could this inn have been? Not a nice little building with a swinging jolly sign over the front door depicting a ferocious green dragon or the head of a buxom queen!

Where travellers stayed overnight is an intriguing question. The places providing accommodation in Asia are much more likely to have been walled and partly roofed in the manner of caravanserais. I simply don't know!

Bethlehem is a hilltop town on a ridge with wide views over the surrounding plain. An ideal defensive position very suitable for the principal town in King David's Judea.

I'll now get round to a few words about the winter climate and the road our Family slowly travelled; chilly, certainly, where snow is far from unknown. Up in what is now Lebanon, at least until the outbreak of the conflict, there was a thriving skiing season which was the envy of many countries round about. That is quite a thought! Largely, I fancy, built up by the French during their Mandate over Lebanon up to the time it became independent.

**Tom Inglis**

## **I am a Christian.**

When I say, "I am a Christian"  
I'm not shouting, "I am saved".  
I'm whispering, "I get lost,  
That is why I chose this way."

When I say "I am a Christian"  
I don't speak of this with pride  
I'm confessing that I stumble  
And need to have a guide.

When I say "I am a Christian"  
I'm not trying to be strong.  
I'm professing that I'm weak  
And pray for strength to carry on.

When I say "I am a Christian"  
I'm not bragging of success.  
I'm admitting I have failed  
And cannot ever pay the debt.

When I say "I am a Christian"  
I'm not claiming to be perfect,  
My flaws are too visible  
But God believes I'm worth it.

When I say "I am a Christian"  
I still feel the sting of pain.  
I still have my share of heartaches  
Which is why I seek His name.

When I say "I am a Christian"  
I do not wish to judge.  
I have no authority.  
I only know I'm loved.

*Provided by David Black*



## **CELEBRATING BIG BIRTHDAYS AT THE VILLAGE KIRK**

The Thursday Coffee Morning in the Village has recently had the pleasure of celebrating the “big” birthdays of two of our regulars – Sandy Bunyan and David Thomson.

### **Sandy Bunyan**

Sandy celebrated his 95<sup>th</sup> birthday on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2024. He was born and brought up in Melrose but, eleven years ago, made the decision to move to Livingston to be near his daughter, as Maureen his late wife had been diagnosed with dementia. Since arriving in Livingston, Sandy has been a regular at the coffee group and every week looks forward to the chat, the lively debates and the discussions, as well as his cup of ‘extra hot’ coffee! Sandy still remembers how welcome he and Maureen were made to feel and how friendly everyone is and how supportive they have been over the years. He says that he has been very lucky to have met such lovely people!

After blowing out the candles, Sandy is ready to join in the singing of ‘Happy Birthday’ with Aileen on the piano and all his friends!



### **David Thomson**

David and his wife Mary have been attending the Coffee Morning for many years but in recent months it has become increasingly difficult for him to walk up the steep path to the Kirk. However, Duncan was ready with a wheelchair at the Kirk gate to transport him to our gathering two days after his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024. There were two very large cakes waiting to be shared – but not until Bruce had read a light-hearted prayer about reaching 90 and reasons why the Good Lord should allow David to reach 100 - followed by blowing out the candles and singing ‘Happy Birthday’, accompanied by Grace on the piano.







“A voice was heard in Ramah,  
wailing and loud lamentation,  
Rachel weeping for her children;  
she refused to be consoled,  
because they are no more.”

Matthew 2:18

This text has been on my mind for a while now. It was written as graffiti on the wall that now surrounds Bethlehem. It was near Rachel's tomb but also next to the peace and reconciliation charity, 'Wi'am', that I visit while on a study trip to Israel with other Church of Scotland ministry candidates. As a grassroots organization established in Bethlehem in 1994, Wi'am aims to improve the quality of relationships and to promote peace, justice, a culture of acceptance and reconciliation in the community.

Although part of the narrative of the birth of Jesus in Matthew, this quotation from Jeremiah is not an obviously Christmassy text. We want to hear about stables, Peace on Earth and Goodwill to All Men. We don't want to hear of the death of babies in Bethlehem, ordered by Herod.

The premature death of one innocent baby at the hands of a power-hungry dictator is an outrage. Yet, at that point in history, killing others, even babies, because they present a threat to your rule, was acceptable. We see around the world, over centuries of history, children that are caught up in power struggles. They find themselves in the middle of war and become collateral damage.

We ask the question, 'why?' Why would God allow these babies to die and their families to suffer? Just like in any situation that involves pain and suffering, we ask 'why' but there is no answer wrapped up neatly with a bow on top.

Perhaps if we look to this text, Matthew might be trying to tell us something. It is a quotation from Jeremiah 31 where the prophet says that in the future days of God's new covenant, he will restore them to their land, forgive their sins and bless them with peace and prosperity. However, in the middle of the chapter is this verse about Rachel, who is buried at Bethlehem, weeping for the children who have been caught up in the violence of war, displaced from their country and taken into exile. Jeremiah 31:15 is not a prediction but a present lament in the context of hope for future blessing.

Matthew is using the text in Jeremiah to remind the believers that in the midst of such sadness, there is hope. This baby, Jesus, was not just sent by God but is God himself, taking on a human body and dwelling with his people. This baby who would grow up and do extraordinary things, like healing the sick and raising the dead. This man who would himself be killed by the political authorities but would rise from the dead to bring in a new kingdom and a new covenant of love and forgiveness and a hope that one day all things would be put right.

Rachel reminds us that though we have much to lament, there is hope because of the baby born in Bethlehem. May you know hope and peace this Christmas time.

*Jeanette Wilson*

## FRIDAY CLUB

Friday Club resumed after the summer break, warmly welcoming back familiar faces along with some new members. The club has evolved into a cooking session designed for children in P5 to P7, offering them the chance to explore a variety of recipes.

Each week, we switch between sweet and savoury dishes, featuring easy-to-follow recipes that everyone can enjoy making both at the club and later at home. Popular dishes so far have included cookies, Eve's pudding, pasta sauce, and tortilla quiches.

We provide all the necessary equipment, including tabletop ovens, stoves, air fryers, aprons, age-appropriate knives and chopping boards.

*Friday Club meets every Friday from 2 to 3:30 pm in the church hall at St. Andrews. Entry is £1, with an optional tuck shop available for an additional £1. For more information or to register, please email [livioldfridayclub@gmail.com](mailto:livioldfridayclub@gmail.com).*

*Livi Old Friday Club Team*




**Friday Club**  
& **Cooking Session**  
2-3.30pm  
P5-P7 age group  
Livingston Old Parish Church  
**St. Andrew's, Deans**

**Cooking, Crafts,  
Games, Fun, Chat  
and Tuck Shop.**

Entry £1  
Tuck shop £1

To register please email  
[livioldfridayclub@gmail.com](mailto:livioldfridayclub@gmail.com)

WWW.livingstonold.org  
Find us on Facebook  
Scottish Charity Number SC011826





## **BARBADIAN ( BAJAN) TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS.**

Christmas in Barbados begins at the start of the Advent calendar but a lot of planning goes on in many Bajan households before this. Although the true meaning of Christmas is paramount, there are also the preparations for making it a joyous one in celebrating the coming of the baby Jesus.

There is planning in primary schools to organise their nativity plays for family and friends to attend. Churches will be doing the same. This is very important for the Christian way of life in Barbados. Pupils in the primary schools will be quite enthused and anticipating who will get the 'starring roles' of Mary, Joseph, shepherds or the Wise Men and are disappointed when not chosen. In my time at primary school, I remember being chosen as a shepherd and, another time, as one of the wise men. Our parents made sure that we learned our lines so that they did not get a showing up on the big day.

Church services began at 11.30 pm on Christmas Eve until midnight, when mostly adults attended, These were usually quite busy and most church were filled to capacity. Christmas Day services usually began at 10am until 11 am and again were well attended.

After the church services, most people would head to Queens Park to show off their new clothes, Ladies in their new and colourful frocks and hats trying to outdo each other and the men in their new suit doing the same. It would be like a catwalk. The police band would be playing on the bandstand and everyone would be enjoying themselves. It usually had a big party atmosphere.

At around 2pm folk would head for home and Christmas dinner and the opening of presents with family. Children's faces would be beaming with pleasure as they opened their parcels to see what Santa had brought them. The radio would be turned on to listen to the Christmas carols and families would join in to sing them. Then there would Christmas dinner.

A typical Christmas dinner would be rice and peas with roast ham, roast pork and roast chicken with sorrel – a spiced drink - for the children. The adults would have something a bit stronger. This would be followed by jelly and ice cream. Later on, friends and close family might visit and the celebration would continue through the night.

I have lived in Scotland for many years now but have been informed by family that the Bajan traditional Christmas has not changed.

*Edmund Forde*





# My trip to Kenya with 5th Livingston Boys' Brigade and Project Stedfast



Jambo (Hello)

After months of preparation and fundraising, I finally set off to Kenya during the October school break with the 5th Livingston Boys' Brigade and Project Stedfast. We arrived at Nairobi Airport early in the morning after a 23-hour journey with a connecting flight from Edinburgh to Doha - let's just say there wasn't much sleep along the way!



We stayed at Subiaco Retreat Centre which is owned by the Benedictine Sisters. We spent the days at St Andrews Centre, which is a school and disabled centre in Ololua, built through Project Stedfast's support. Just last month, a new Brigade hall was added there and so we helped finish the project by landscaping the area, building a retaining wall and laying a new road to the hall. We painted the school's classrooms and created a new playground with two swings and a roundabout that we purchased in Nairobi. The children were delighted!

We visited the Street Boys Centre in Ngong, which provides shelter to over 100 boys aged 8 and up, many of whom have faced challenging circumstances that led them to the streets. We brought donations from Scotland, including football boots, kits, clothes, and essential supplies and enjoyed a friendly game of football with them. Seeing the difference between the bare minimum they have and what I take for granted was truly eye opening.

In our second week, we took a break from work and explored various parts of Kenya, including Amboseli, Sopa Naivasha and the Masai Mara National Reserve. We went on sunrise and sunset safaris and saw an incredible range of wildlife, including four of the Big Five (we missed the rhinos), along







with zebras, crocodiles, pelicans, hummingbirds and many more! It was absolutely breathtaking.

Now that I'm back home, I carry with me memories and friendships that will last a lifetime.

A huge thank you to everyone who supported Project Stedfast and helped us make such a positive impact.

Asante sana (thank you very much).

**ROSS**



## December 2015

There once was a couple who sent  
Correspondence each year with intent  
Their love to convey  
To those far away  
In verses they sought to invent.

So at Christmas, midst food and fine wines,  
You will find yourself reading these lines  
For by email or post  
To both country and coast  
We despatch them – of our love the signs.

So don't be averse to a verse  
'Just sit yersel doon on yer erse'  
Don't struggle or strive – Be glad you're alive,  
And not yet awaiting the hearse!

But sadly we must change the mood  
For the news coming in is not good;  
With terror and bombing  
Besides global warming  
And millions with not enough food.

But a parallel story we tell  
Of compassion and courage as well;  
A story that's stranger  
It starts in a manger  
Defying the forces of hell.

So as Christmas comes round once again,  
With its promise of goodwill to men  
(And women and children ... and all of creation)  
Believe that it was not in vain.

For the Spirit that in Jesus dwelt  
When with all kinds of people he dealt  
The unclean and the stressed,  
The outcast and the rest,  
Can still in our own lives be felt,

So celebrate once more this year  
In the face of all trouble and fear;  
Rejoice in the story  
Which tells of God's glory  
Being witnessed right now and right here.

*With acknowledgement to Mr J MacEwan – contributed by Janet Mackay*

**Gift Aid Declaration**  
**The Church of Scotland**

**Name of congregation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Donor's Full Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Donor's Title: Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Rev.:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Donor's Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Postcode:** \_\_\_\_\_

I wish the Congregation to treat all donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise, as Gift Aid donations. The congregation may also treat donations in the four years prior to this tax year (6<sup>th</sup> April to 5<sup>th</sup> April) as Gift Aid Donations.

I confirm that I have paid or will pay an annual amount of Income Tax and/or capital Gains Tax that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities which I support will reclaim on my gifts. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify.

**Signature of Donor:** ..... **Date of signing:** .....

**Please give the completed form to the Treasurer**



