

Park Pages

the magazine of Uddingston: Park United Free Church of Scotland



Letter from the Minister

Winter 2024

Dear Friends,

I recently came upon an old magazine article which carried a feature in which some well-known people of the time were asked what Christmas meant to them. Here is what some of them said.

Toyah Wilcox, the singer: It's the only time of the year that I don't say no to anything, except meat. My husband and I are vegetarians.

Muriel Gray, TV personality: As a Scot, I don't make a fuss about Christmas. It's an English festival. I keep my strength for Hogmanay!

Ken Livingstone: Christmas is the time when everyone sits down and eats too much and drinks too much, and has family rows. It's just a habit!

Martin Amis, novelist: For me, the essence of the English Christmas is finding myself half-drunk in the middle of the afternoon, slumped in front of Thunderball. Otherwise, it's a totally meaningless date in my calendar, although my five-year-old announced recently that Jesus was born on that day.

Toyah Wilcox was a well-known singer and dancer in the late 1970s and 80s. She is regarded as being one of the leaders of the Punk movement and an organiser of some spectacular concerts. She has had a long-standing interest in other forms of spirituality...some would say she has dabbled in the dark arts. However, the contemporary audience of *Strictly Come Dancing* was not impressed by her dancing skills and she was in the first two "dance-offs" of the competition and voted out on the third programme. Her past fame was unable to save her now!

Muriel Gray made quite a name for herself in the media with her strident and provocative views. She also made a sizeable fortune through very profitable media business dealings. However, she bears the deep sadness of a daughter who was severely brain-damaged by a diving accident and needs constant care and attention. And her dream of an independent Scotland remains still a dream!

Ken Livingstone was once the *bête noire* of the Tory right, and was well known on many platforms demonstrating against perceived injustices and inequalities. His comments about Zionism made him open to the accusation of antisemitism, and in 2023 his family announced he was suffering from a steadily progressing form of dementia.

Martin Amis was loudly acclaimed as one of the finest authors of his generation, writing over 20 novels. He was well known for his satirical and critical comments on other writers of the late 20th century. A life-long smoker, he died in Florida in 2023 after a long and painful illness with oesophageal cancer.



I have deliberately told you all of this for I think it puts their understanding of Christmas into context. Well-known people in their day, but how quickly fame fades, and fortune does not prevent illness, sorrow or death! While very different people, two things seem to be a common factor for these people then, and also for many today.

- The first is a dismissal or ignorance of the Christ Child that is at the heart of the Christmas story.
- The second is indulgence and excess, not just in terms of food, drink and drugs, but also in their expression of views and opinions. Eat, drink and be merry...for tomorrow may never come! But of course, tomorrow *does* come!

The true message of Christmas puts all of that into perspective and offers **HOPE** in the midst of the passing of the years.

Speaking of the coming of Christ to our world, the apostle Paul wrote:

For the grace of God has dawned upon the world for the healing of mankind. And by it we are disciplined to renounce all godless ways and worldly desires, to live a life of temperance, honesty and godliness in the present age. Titus 2 v 11,12



The event which many today use as an excuse for every kind of excess, is seen by the apostle Paul as a reason for sober living. What he calls *godless ways and worldly desires* were all part of these people's lives, and one way or another, have taken their toll on them and their families. A story that can be repeated throughout the western world today.

For the Christian, such an attitude should have no place in our celebrations. However, neither should *temperance, honesty and godliness* exclude joyful celebration. After all, only the Christian truly knows the reason for this season. The grace of God that brings meaning and purpose for this life and eternity, has appeared to our world. The message of the birth of the Christ Child that caused the angels to sing, and the shepherds and wise men to fall on their knees and worship, is still the same message that brings **HOPE** to our world today!



Cynicism, indulgence, past fame or notoriety have no place in the Christian story, and those who delight in these things will find no home in the stable, or at the foot of the cross.

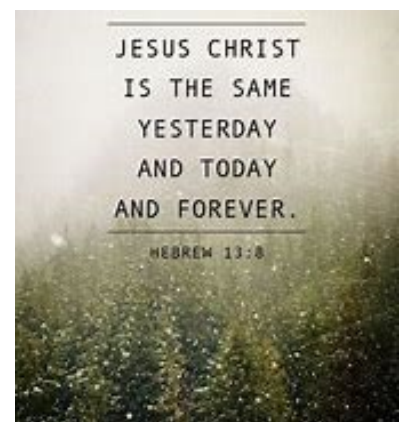
Indeed, the darker the times in which we live, the greater and deeper is the joy of Christmas. We celebrate the One who is the same:

**Yesterday, today and forever,
Jesus is the same.
All may change, but Jesus never,
Glory to His name.**



May our Christmas and New Year be marked by the blessing of His presence in our midst.

With warm Christmas Greetings from The Manse



Wm B Russell

Advent and Christmas at Park

Sunday 1 December 	10.30am Advent Communion Village Christmas Tea Room will be open in the Hall 12.30pm—3pm School choirs at 1.30pm	  Advent  Prepare a way for the Lord 
Sunday 8 December	10.30am Rev Ian McQuarrie	
Wednesday 11 December	2pm Christmas Afternoon at the Bield	
Sunday 15 December	10.30am The Key to Christmas	
Sunday 22 December	10.30am Nativity Play 7pm Kirkintilloch Junior Band and Local Community Choir	
	10.30am Short Devotional 11.30pm Watchnight Service	
CHRISTMAS DAY 	10.30am Celebrate the King	
Christmas Sunday 29 December	10.30am Looking forward in Faith	PUT YOUR BEST <i>faith</i> FORWARD
Epiphany Sunday 5 January	10.30am Morning Service 6.30pm United Praise with Grace Church Bothwell	 EPIPHANY

Gabriel's Questions



Gabriel must have scratched his head at this one. He wasn't one to question his God-given missions. Sending fire and dividing seas were all in an eternity's work for this angel.

When God sent, Gabriel went.

And when word got out that God was to become man, Gabriel was enthused. He could envision the moment:

The Messiah in a blazing chariot.

The King descending on a fiery cloud.

An explosion of light from which the Messiah would emerge.



That's what he expected. What he never expected, however, was what he got: a slip of paper with a Nazarene address. **"God will become a baby,"** it read. **"Tell the mother to name the child Jesus. And tell her not to be afraid."**

Gabriel was never one to question, but this time he had to wonder.

God will become a baby? Gabriel had seen babies before. He had been platoon leader on the bulrush operation. He remembered what little Moses looked like.

That's okay for humans, he thought to himself. *But God?*

The heavens can't contain him; how could a body? Besides, have you seen what comes out of those babies? Hardly befitting for the Creator of the universe. Babies must be carried and fed, bounced and bathed. To imagine some mother burping God on her shoulder—that was beyond what even an angel could imagine.



And what of this name—what was it—*Jesus*? Such a common name. There's a Jesus in every cul-de-sac. Come on, even *Gabriel* has more punch to it than *Jesus*. Call the baby *Eminence* or *Majesty* or *Heaven-sent*. Anything but *Jesus*.

So Gabriel scratched his head. What happened to the good ol' days? The Sodom and Gomorrah stuff. Flooding the globe. Flaming swords. That's the action he liked.

But Gabriel had his orders. Take the message to Mary. *Must be a special girl*, he assumed as he travelled. But Gabriel was in for another shock. One peek told him Mary was no queen. The mother-to-be of God was not regal. She was a Jewish peasant who'd barely outgrown acne and had a crush on a guy named Joe.

And speaking of Joe—what does this fellow know? Might as well be a weaver in Spain or a cobbler in Greece. He's a carpenter. Look at him over there, sawdust in his beard and nail apron around his waist. You're telling me God is going to have dinner every night with him? You're telling me the source of wisdom is going to call this guy "Dad?" You're telling me a common laborer is going to be charged with giving food to God?



What if he gets laid off?

What if he gets cranky?

What if he decides to run off with a pretty young girl from down the street?
Then where will we be?

It was all Gabriel could do to keep from turning back.

"This is a peculiar idea you have, God," he must have muttered to himself.



Are God's guardians given to such musings?

Are we? Are we still stunned by God's coming? Still staggered by the event? Does Christmas still spawn the same speechless wonder it did two thousand years ago?

I've been asking that question lately—to myself. As I write, Christmas is only days away and something just happened that has me concerned that the pace of the holidays may be overshadowing the purpose of the holidays.

I saw a manger in a mall. Correct that. I *barely* saw a manger in a mall. I almost didn't see it. I was in a hurry. Guests coming. Santa dropping in. Sermons to be prepared. Services to be planned. Presents to be purchased.

The crush of things was so great that the crèche of Christ was almost ignored. I nearly missed it. And had it not been for the child and his father, I would have.

But out of the corner of my eye, I saw them. The little boy, three, maybe four years old, in jeans and high-tops staring at the manger's infant. The father, in baseball hat and work clothes, looking over his son's shoulder, gesturing first at Joseph, then Mary, then the baby. He was telling the little fellow the story.

And oh, the twinkle in the boy's eyes. The wonder on his little face. He didn't speak. He just listened. And I didn't move. I just watched. What questions were filling the little boy's head? Could they have been the same as Gabriel's? What sparked the amazement on his face? Was it the magic?

And why is it that out of a hundred or so of God's children, only two paused to consider his son? What is this December demon that steals our eyes and stills our tongues? Isn't this the season to pause and pose Gabriel's questions?

The tragedy is not that we can't answer them, but that we are too busy to ask them.

Only heaven knows how long Gabriel fluttered unseen above Mary before he took a breath and broke the news. But he did. He told her the name. He told her the plan. He told her not to be afraid. And when he announced, **"With God nothing is impossible!"** he said it as much for himself as for her.



For even though he couldn't answer the questions, he knew who could, and that was enough. And even though we can't answer them all, taking time to ask a few would be a good start.

It Began in a Manger Published by Word Publishing © 1995 by Max Lucado

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Heavenly Father

We thank you for the gift of your Son this Christmas. Help us to see beyond the hustle and bustle, the buying of presents and food so that we do not miss out on the wonder of seeing Jesus in the manger with fresh eyes. Help us to pause and ask the questions that Gabriel posed and remind ourselves that with You, nothing is impossible. In Jesus' name, Amen

Have you ever wondered?

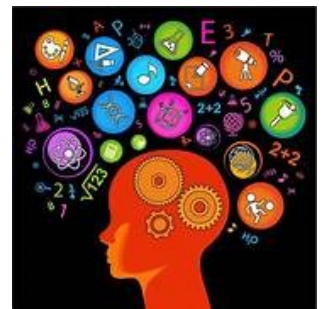
Gabriel may have asked a few questions of God but I'm sure you and I are still grappling with questions today. I was gifted this book in the summer, but when I saw it featured in last month's Stedfast, I thought it was time to study it in more detail. It is edited by Andy Bannister and Gavin Matthews, but has contributors from the world of science, law, theology and history. The book explores 28 common questions in today's culture which have pointed people to Christ and given them a sense of meaning and purpose in life. This article explores just four of them.



Have you ever wondered why humans are incurably curious? By Mary Jo Sharp

Mary Jo was a former atheist who came to faith. She is now an assistant professor of Apologetics at Houston Christian University.

She makes the point that as soon as humans begin to talk, we start asking the question, "Why?" We want to know how things work, we marvel at the beauty of creation, even if we don't acknowledge God as The Creator, and we want to know more about our world and outer space. This curiosity has driven technology in almost every conceivable field. **But what makes humans so incurably curious?**



God created man "in his own image" and we were made to mirror something of God himself. The author states that we reflect this through our rationality and self-awareness and these gifts, which are wired deeply into our nature, are what drive our curiosity and passion to question everything around us as well as the existence of God himself. However, if humans could fully comprehend everything about God, then God would become something of our own creation. But if God created the universe, including humans, then He would be greater than us in every way. Wondering is a mechanism through which we grow and mature and as we begin to understand things God has made, we then begin to understand this Creator God. She concludes that we were made for a relationship with the awesome and infinite Creator God, the source of our insatiably curious minds.

Biblical Quote: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55 v 8-9

Have you ever wondered why we crave money despite knowing it's not the answer? By Andy Moore

Andy Moore is the vice principal of Finance and Portfolio Performance for Talanton, an impact investment fund.

The cost of living crisis has hit our society hard and for some the choice has come between putting food on the table or heating the home. Who could blame people for thinking if they just had a little bit more money, all life's problems would go away? However, money won't make us happy in itself. Humanity has always strived for happiness. Aristotle suggests we do things according to what we think will result from those actions e.g. we do X because we think it will give us Y and so on. You can read more about his theories on the pursuit of happiness in *Nicomachean Ethics* written around 400 BC if you are interested!



Sometimes when things aren't going well, we feel God is absent and doesn't care. Yet, according to Jesus, our Heavenly Father is committed to providing for us. If there is nothing in our bank account, where else should we look? **We often crave money despite knowing it's not the answer.** So in these uncertain times, might it be worth seeking God first?

Biblical Quote: "...do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body what you will wear...But seek first his kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Matthew 6 v 25, 33

Have you ever wondered what God thinks of you? By David Nixon

David Nixon is a pastor at Carrubbers Christian Centre in Edinburgh.

We often wonder what other people think of us but David asks the question, **“Have you ever wondered what God thinks of you?”** That’s a scary question as we know that we can never measure up fully to how we are meant to be. David uses the story of Nicodemus to illustrate how God can transform the rebellious and self-righteous hearts of his people. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a member of a strict religious order, he was highly educated and enjoyed high status in the community. Surely he would qualify for heaven? But Nicodemus was stunned when Jesus said that “no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again”.



Nicodemus was not acceptable to God in his current state and if the very religious, very good, very knowledgeable and very respectable Nicodemus doesn’t qualify, what hope is there for the rest of us? Jesus confronts each one of us with the bad news that without a miracle we too will be excluded from His kingdom, but the good news is that Jesus has come to remove our sin and restore us into a relationship with God. God sees us as we are, warts and all, but He loves us too much to leave us in this state. He wants to restore us into what He created us to be through the saving work of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection.

Biblical Quote: For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3 v 16

Have you ever wondered why we preserve the past? By Anne Witton

Anne Witton is a writer and speaker based in Newcastle who has spent many years in full-time mission work.

Are you a hoarder? Is your loft filled with letters and photos, books, all a reminder of special moments from the past? We erect gravestones in memory of loved ones and pass heirlooms down through the generations. We also preserve our past as a nation with visitors crowding to historic sites and museums bursting with relics from past days. **Why are we so keen to preserve our past?**



Anne suggests there are many reasons. One reason is to build on the knowledge of those gone before and also to avoid repeating their mistakes. George Santayana said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it”. We also preserve the past to celebrate our traditions, cultures and communities e.g. not letting the Welsh or Gaelic languages die out. However, she suggests the main reason is to get a sense of who we are and where we belong in the world. Appreciating our past gives us a context to understand our present and future.

And what about the bigger story that we are all part of? The Bible is a historic book that has been read more than any other book in the world and its importance has been acknowledged by countless generations. It gives valuable insight into a historic drama that is ongoing today. Preserving past traditions was crucial for the Israelites e.g. The Passover festival where they remembered God’s rescue of his people from slavery in Egypt. Jews still celebrate it to this day as a way of remembering God’s faithfulness, love and care. Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with the disciples just before he went to the cross to die for us all and make a way for us to come back to God. As Christians we re-enact this meal in the bread and wine of communion.

Jesus’ ancestry can be traced back to Abraham, the father of the people of Israel, and every event in the Old Testament leads up to his coming which has shaped subsequent human history. Our personal memorabilia will be consigned to the dustbin no doubt by our offspring, but we are part of God’s story where our every moment, memory, hair on our heads is redeemed and saved for eternity. As Christians we can know **now** that we can have a hope for the **future** because of what God has done in the **past**.

Biblical Quote: Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me”. Matthew 26 v 26

I hope these four questions have whetted your appetite to delve deeper into this book as it’s good to ask questions. Why do we long for happiness? Why does music have the power to move us? Were you created for a purpose? Are all religions basically the same? and Why do we long for justice? These are just some of the other topics covered. Each chapter is only three or four pages long so the ideal book to dip in and out of over the holiday period.

Come let us sing for joy to the Lord!

This year we are looking at the Christmas story through the eyes of the shepherds out in the hills. The first carol is well known and was the very first carol to be written. The second one, *Shepherd Boy*, was written in 2024. It has the most delightful video to accompany it which perfectly encapsulates the joy and wonder the little shepherd boy felt on witnessing the proclamation and birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. May we all know his sense of wonderment this Advent season.



While Shepherds Watched their Flocks

This carol by Nahum Tate retells the Christmas story which we read about in Luke 2 v 8-14. It dates from the late 17th century. Tate was born in Dublin and educated at Trinity College but moved to London in 1688 and entered the literary circles in the city. The Church at this time sang exclusively Psalms of David so this hymn was a departure from the norm. However, Tate was careful to choose a passage in the New Testament that referred back to David, "To you in David's town this day is born of David's line" and this hymn is the first known to record the angels' proclamation of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. The original title of the hymn was "Song of the Angels".

The shepherds weren't just random additions to the Christmas story. God specifically chose the lowest in society to be the first to hear the Good News. There would be few awake at that hour except the shepherds looking after their sheep out on the hillsides. Imagine their surprise when the sky was illuminated with a great light and the angel of the Lord appeared.

The angel says, "**Fear not!**" - fear would be an understandable human reaction to this event—but then goes on to say, "**I bring you good news of great joy**". The shepherds were considered unclean by many in society, so it is fitting that God spoke his message to them as Jesus came to save sinners. Paul himself said: "**Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.**" **1 Timothy 1 v 15**



We read further on in the chapter that the shepherds rushed down to Bethlehem, eager to see the Christ child for themselves and to share the good news with everyone they met. This is how the news of the Gospel should impact our own lives; we should be eager to share it with others.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. While shepherds watched their flocks by night
all seated on the ground
the angel of the Lord came down
and glory shone around | 4. "The heavenly babe you there shall find
To human view displayed,
all meanly wrapped in swaddling bands,
and in a manger laid." |
| 2. "Fear not," said he—for mighty dread
had seized their troubled mind -
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring
to you and all mankind: | 5. Thus spake the angel; and forthwith
appeared a shining throng
of angels praising God, who thus
addressed their joyful song: |
| 3. "To you in David's town this day
is born of David's line,
a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.
And this shall be sign: | 6. "All glory be to God on high,
and to the earth be peace:
goodwill henceforth from heaven to men
Begin and never cease!" |

To listen to the carol, click [here](#)

Shepherd Boy

This song was written by **Phil Wickham** in 2024 . In **Shepherd Boy** we witness the incredible story of Jesus' birth through the eyes of a humble shepherd boy. The accompanying video illustrates the story of the song and is guaranteed to bring a lump to your throat with its beautiful depiction of the little boy and his sense of wonder and joy at seeing the promised Messiah face-to-face. I think we can all identify with the little boy when he says in verse 1, **"This kind of thing shouldn't happen to me"**. Today is like any other day, up on the hillsides watching over his flock of sheep, when suddenly he is transported into the midst of the divine miracle of Jesus' birth. He sees the sky light up with the brilliance of a star and hears the angelic voices proclaiming the arrival of the Saviour into our world.

He is so excited he has to see for himself the miracle that's taking place. He doesn't let his lack of status stop him from going to see the long-awaited Saviour. God often calls the least among us to do His work and be part of his story. We read in **1 Corinthians 1 v 27**:

God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

When the shepherd boy finally arrives at the stable, he is in awe at what he sees; the Saviour of the world cradled in his mother's arms. He is overcome and moved to tears as he hails **"the Lion of Judah, the King of my heart"** and wants to tell everyone about it. An encounter with Christ should have the same effect on us; it should bring us a lasting joy which compels us to share the Good News with others.

1. This kind of thing shouldn't happen to me
I'm just a boy who watches the sheep
But I saw a miracle
A star like the morning lit up the sky
A choir of angels filled up the sky
They sang of a miracle

Chorus

*Glory to God in the highest
Peace to His people here on earth
For the Savior is born
Emmanuel, God is with us
And He will reign forevermore
Jesus Christ the Lord of Lords x 2*

2. So I ran to the town to see if it's true
Is He really here?
Had Heaven come through?
And oh it was beautiful
Cause there in the stable asleep in her arms
The Lion of Judah, the King of my heart
With tears filling up my eyes
Of this I will testify

Bridge

*He brings joy to the world
Joy to the world
He brings joy to the world
Oh He brings joy to the world*

This Christmastime, may we experience the joy and wonder of the shepherd boy as we welcome the Saviour into our hearts and homes. Emmanuel. God with us!



*Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace, good
will towards men.*

Luke 2 v 9



To listen to the song click [here](#)

Church News

Shoebox Appeal

Good News, Great Joy!

We have been packing shoeboxes at Park since 2002! This year we decided to make it our main Christmas Appeal and we gathered in over 80 shoeboxes as well as monetary donations. A big **THANK YOU** to everyone who contributed to this appeal.

These shoeboxes will now go to a distribution centre in Glasgow where they will be checked and packed into big cartons ready to be shipped off to over a 100 countries in the world. A shoebox filled with gifts is a tangible expression of God's love for each child that receives one.

Many of the children receiving these gifts are also invited to participate in a programme called **The Greatest Journey** which is a series of 12 fun and interactive sessions on how to follow Jesus and to share Him with others. In this way, many families are reached, churches grow and communities are transformed.

A child in Africa's lifelong journey with Jesus may start with a shoebox packed by a member of Park Church in Uddingston!



MacMillan Coffee Morning at the Bield Housing

A coffee morning was held in aid of **Macmillan Cancer Support** in the Bield Housing on Wednesday 18 September. The staff and residents would like to thank the members of Park Church who attended and helped raise the magnificent sum of £1060.



Ladies' Association Coffee Morning

The Ladies' Association ran a very successful coffee morning on Saturday 5 October which raised a total of £1212. Both the church family and the local community supported it in good numbers and the ladies were kept busy refilling their tea and coffee pots all morning. The home baking was particularly well received. There were also stalls of gifts and cards, home made crafts, bric-a-brac and home baking. Proceeds from the coffee morning will be distributed among several charities.



Infant Baptism

We celebrated the infant baptism of **Elliot James Steiner**, son of Rachel and Mike, on 20 October 2024. The parents were supported by Rachel's brother, Fraser, and her cousin Lyndsey who offered up a beautiful, heartfelt prayer for Elliot. We pray that Elliot will come to know Jesus for himself as he learns the bible stories in his church in Germany. The family kindly provided a sandwich lunch and christening cake in the hall, which was greatly enjoyed by all the congregation.



Christmas Traditions across the World



Mexico

Las Posadas (Spanish for inn), is a Christmas tradition which takes place between 16-24 December when small versions of Mary and Joseph are passed around different households, spending one night in each. This is symbolic of Mary and Joseph's search for a room at the inn. On Christmas Eve, the figures are returned to the church, ready to welcome the Christ Child once more. The celebrations last till 6 January, marking El Dia de los Reyes, the Day of the Kings, which is when the children receive their gifts.



Philippines

The people make a Christmas lantern called **paról**. It is shaped like a star to remind them of the Star of Bethlehem and is made out of bamboo and paper. A giant lantern festival takes place in the city of San Fernando.



Spain

In Spain the celebrations begin on 8 December when families observe the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Many travel to Seville cathedral to watch a dance performance called **Los Seises** to honour the Virgin Mary. Spanish families decorate their homes with life-size nativity scenes called **nacimientos** and on Christmas Eve they look for the first star in the sky to remind them of the star of Bethlehem.



Sweden

The Swedes begin their celebrations on 13 December which is also known as St Lucia's Day, the patron saint of light. The eldest daughter in a family dresses up in a long, white gown and serves coffee and saffron buns to her family. The Swedes use straw to decorate their homes and Christmas tree to remind themselves that Jesus was born in a humble manger.



Romania

Romanian families make a star that represents the star of Bethlehem. It's usually made of coloured paper and decorated with tinsel, silver foil and bells. There is a picture of baby Jesus or a nativity scene in the middle of the star which is then placed on a pole. This pole is carried round with carol singers as they visit their neighbours and friends.



Ethiopia

Christmas is celebrated on 7 January but the Ethiopian Orthodox Church does not call the celebration of Christ's birth Christmas, instead it is called **Genna**. Ethiopian families fast the day before, dress in white clothing and attend a traditional Mass at 4am! The celebrations don't end on Genna, they restart on 19 January with **Timkat** which commemorates Christ's baptism in the River Jordan. Everyone attends church where the music is lively and people wear traditional costume.



Ukraine

Families in Ukraine wait for the first star to appear before traditionally serving a 12 - course dinner on Christmas Eve. It is called **Sviata Vecheria**, Holy Dinner, and begins with a prayer and the lighting of the holy candle. Each course represents one of the 12 Apostles. The main dish is **Kutia** which is boiled wheat mixed with poppy seeds and honey. On Christmas morning people greet each other with "Christ is born!" and the response is "Let us praise Him". Later in the day children go carol singing and are usually rewarded with sweets!



Advent Wreath and Candles

Like many other Advent traditions, the Advent wreath originates in Germany. The circular shape of the wreath represents God's unending love and the eternal life we have through Jesus. The advent wreath and candles provide beautiful symbolism for the four-week period of Advent as we await the arrival of the Christ Child.



How did the tradition begin?

The story goes that a Lutheran pastor in Germany, called Johann Hinrich Wichern, built the first wreath out of an old cartwheel. He wanted to help the children in his mission school count down the days to Christmas. He added small, red candles every weekday and Saturday during the four weeks of Advent, and a large white candle on a Sunday. The cartwheel evolved into a smaller wreath with four or five candles.

Advent wreaths are circular to represent God's everlasting love and are usually made of evergreen leaves which represent the hope of eternal life brought by Jesus Christ. Wreaths can simply be hung on the door and have become very popular in the recent past. However, in church the advent wreath has a much deeper meaning.

The Four Candles

The four Advent candles represent hope, peace, joy and love. One candle is lit each Sunday on the run up to Christmas. Sometimes a larger, white candle is lit in the middle of the wreath on Christmas Eve and is known as the "Christ Candle". The light from the candles remind us of who Jesus is.



In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. John 1 v 4-5.

Occasionally, holly leaves and berries are added to the wreath. The leaves are symbolic of the crown of thorns placed on Jesus' head during the crucifixion. The red berries are symbolic of the blood Jesus shed for our sins on the cross. The candles can be different colours depending on tradition but these are the common ones.

- The first candle is purple and symbolises **HOPE**. It is called the "**Prophet's Candle**" in remembrance of prophets like Isaiah who foretold Jesus' birth.
- The second candle is also purple and is sometimes called the Bethlehem Candle symbolising **PEACE**.
- The third candle is pink and is called the Shepherd's Candle which represents **JOY** at Jesus' birth.
- The fourth candle is purple and is called the Angel's Candle which represents **LOVE**. This reminds us of God's love for humanity and the call for us to love one another.

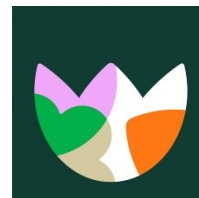
I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. John 8 v 12



Grow Uddingston Update

by Donald Burt

Success for Uddingston in the Beautiful Scotland Awards



Thanks to everyone who directly and indirectly helped in the success achieved by **Grow Uddingston** at the Keep Scotland Beautiful (KSB) "Beautiful Scotland" Awards. Following the judges' visit in early August, we were delighted to win the **Gold Award** as well as the **Best Urban Community Award** at the KSB Awards ceremony held in Duthie Park, Aberdeen in September.

There are also discretionary/specific awards and we won the **Jim Murdie Award for Sustainability**, relating to a project planting about 1800 trees near the Raith Interchange.

However, Autumn seems to come around very quickly and the baskets and planters have now been taken down for the season. In saying that, there were some delays in taking these down (particularly at the Railway Station) and with the mild spell of weather, the flowers survived, providing an extra few weeks of colour. Bulbs will be planted in the black tubs for the Spring.

With the construction work of the new lift system at the Railway Station coming to an end in July, we have spent the time since then weeding, renovating and replanting the relevant areas.

We have planted over 100 perennials on the "Glasgow" side of the station and replanted the climbers on the "Edinburgh" side which we removed and stored during the construction work. Hopefully all will survive the winter and establish themselves by the Spring.



Christmas Fayre

One of our main fundraising events of the year is our Christmas Fayre, which will be held on **Sunday, 1 December from 12 noon - 3pm at the Cross.**

There will be lots of attractions such as dancers, music from the Bellshill Salvation Army Band, stalls, raffle and tombola, Santa, etc, Muiredge and St John's Primary Schools will also be singing in Park Church between 1.30 - 2pm. Local shops will be open.

So please come along and support this festive local community event! All money raised by the group helps towards the purchase of plants and flowers to keep the Main Street looking good throughout the year.





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