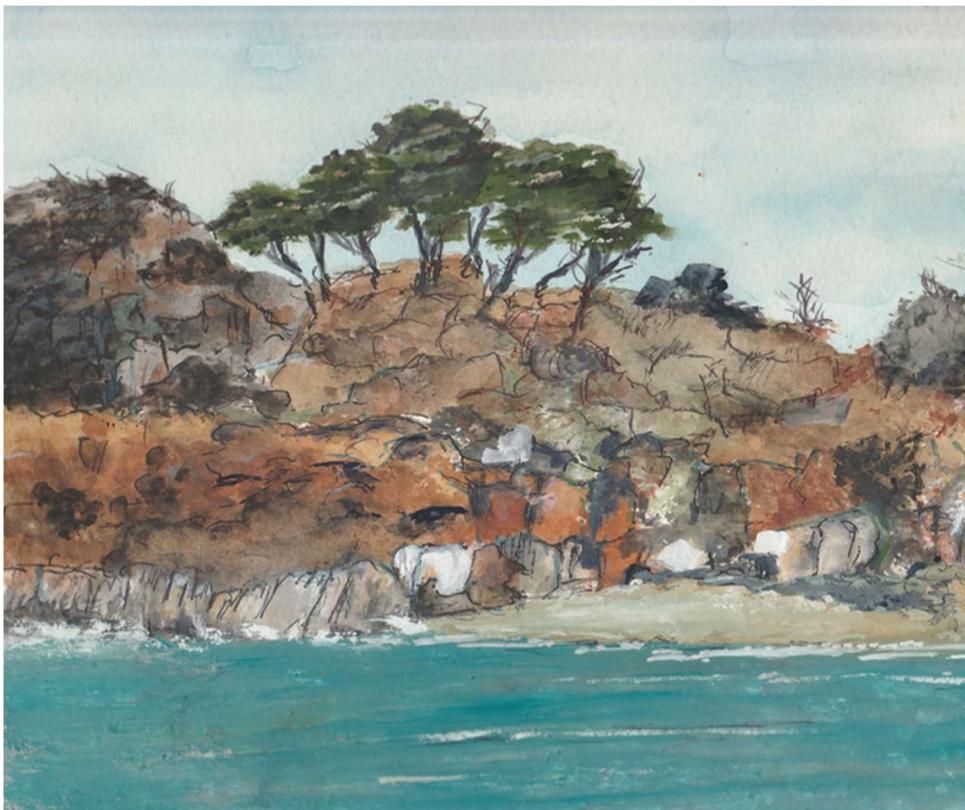


January and February 2018
THE MESSENGER



The Magazine of
St Michael And All Angels
Episcopal Church, Helensburgh
www.stmichaelhelensburgh.org.uk



Service Details

Sunday

8:00am Communion from the Reserved Sacrament (1970 Rite)

9:30am Open Spirit Contemporary Worship

10:30am Sung Eucharist (1982 Rite) or
Communion from the Reserved Sacrament (1982 Rite) or
Service of the Word (2015 Rite)
Crèche and Sunday Clubs

6:30pm Prayer Book Choral Evensong

Tuesdays

10:30am Said Eucharist (1970 Rite) followed by refreshments

For dates of services please see Diary (Page 10) inside



ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS, WILLIAM STREET, HELENSBURGH

Charity Registered in Scotland SC006468

The Diocese of Glasgow & Galloway

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From the Lay Reader

‘But this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus’. Philippians 3: 13b – 14

They say as one gets older, time passes more quickly. It certainly seems to be true with 2017, and with every New Year we again take stock of the past twelve months, at the same time looking ahead to the coming year. What will it bring for ourselves, our families, our church, our community, our world?

As a church family we made a major transition into Vacancy in October 2017. Thanks to the efforts of the church family we have come together in very positive way to fill gaps in duty rotas, such as opening and closing the church every day. We have adjusted to new forms of worship, with the need for more Communions from the Reserved Sacrament, and our occasional experiments with the Service of the Word. I hope the variety of styles of worship, the help we have received from visiting clergy, and even the choices of hymns have worked successfully. I am grateful for the positive feedback, as I believe together we are doing the best we can to maintain worship until our new incumbent arrives. We have been praying hard about who God will send us, and the start of 2018 will see an acceleration of pace in seeking a new rector. It has been important for us to take stock and recognise where we are as a church, to understand our strengths and weaknesses, and to prepare the congregational and rector’s profiles – both of which are vital in attracting someone in sympathy with our church and the area it serves. Active recruitment will soon begin.

MESSENGER

January/February 2018

Contents

From the Lay Reader.....	3
News.....	4
Notices.....	4
Vestry Report.....	5
Mothers’ Union.....	9
Calendar.....	10
Eco-congregation.....	12
Open Spirit.....	13
St. Michael’s Website.....	14
Bishop’s Christmas Message.....	14
Rambling Club.....	16
Lectionary.....	17
Tom Allison’s Paintings....	17
Readers List.....	18

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From the Lay Reader (continued)

With a world facing economic and social uncertainty, wars continuing to cause untold suffering, moral standards in public and private life in decline, and the Church struggling to find a voice to address these challenging issues, it is all the more important for us to follow the Apostle Paul's advice in the verse from Philippians 3 I have been using in each edition of the Messenger as our motto for the Vacancy. As the writer to the Hebrews wrote, we need to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith as never before. With so many distractions and challenges in the world around us, we need to focus on Jesus to find the answers to these dilemmas. We want to hand on to our new incumbent a church that is growing in numbers and growing in faith, becoming better disciples and more like Jesus.

Please keep praying for our whole church family as we work together this year. If we have faith and trust in God, who knows what miracles may happen?

With prayers for the Holy Spirit to inspire us and enlarge our vision of what God can do.

Kevin Boak

News

I have taken the liberty of using one of Tom Allison's beautiful paintings for our front cover this month.

Wishing you all a Very Merry Christmas!

Richard Smith, Editor

Notices

MONTHLY COFFEE MORNING

There will be no Coffee Morning in January.

The February Coffee Morning will be held at Jill Braid's house, Ortona, 41 Charlotte Street, Helensburgh at 10:30am on the 7th December tel: 678054.

Maureen Kyle

SIDESPERSONS' LEADER

We are still in urgent need of a volunteer to take up the vacant post of sidespersons' leader. We hope that an existing sidesperson or another member of the congregation will come forward. Please contact Brian for details on 01436 672 951.

Brian Kyle

Vestry Report January 2018

FROM THE VESTRY MEETING ON 6TH NOVEMBER:

We welcomed our Interim Priest, Kenny Macaulay, who was in attendance to see how we are getting on and to offer his support. He confirmed his role as a 'watching brief' and he will be conducting the occasional service at St Michael's during the vacancy.

VACANCY MATTERS:

PROFILE DOCUMENTS. Copies of the draft 'Congregational Profile' and 'Rector Profile' have been available at the back of the church since early October, and are also on the website. There has been some feedback. It was agreed that Vestry Secretary will generate updated drafts with the aim of agreeing a final draft by the AGM on 10th December for subsequent presentation to the bishop

PASTORAL VISITING. The importance of making sure those needing pastoral visiting are not forgotten during the vacancy was agreed. This includes those people who are taken communion as well as those simply needing a visit.

FUNERALS. Our Interim Priest reminded the vestry of his availability to take funeral services during the vacancy if required and when appropriate.

KEYS AND ACCESS. The vestry noted with appreciation that the church is being unlocked each morning and secured around sunset by a team of volunteers co-ordinated by Chris Packard.

PROPERTY MATTERS:

SLIDING DOOR TO UPPER HALL. The sliding door from the flower vestry to the upper hall is part of the fire escape route from the church during services (but not the other way), and the Property Manager will therefore remove the security hook from the door. This door will be unlocked during services, but kept locked when the church is open during the day, and the inner sliding door between the church and flower vestry will be kept unlocked, allowing visitor access to the disabled toilet.

LOCKABLE COLLECTION BOX. The creation of a lockable wooden collection box installed underneath the wooden table at the West end of the church, accessible through a slot in the table, is a feasible solution for collecting cash donations from visitors, and specifically payment for the stained-glass booklets. The collection box will be manufactured in due course.

Vestry Report (continued)

INTERNAL PAINTWORK. The Property Manager reported that, despite our use of specialist paint during the recent internal re-decoration, there is a disappointing degree of bubbling to the paintwork which is evident on the lower walls, and particularly on the South side of the nave which catches the worst weather. Damp meter readings were taken from which it is evident that moisture levels are excessive. The Victorian builders used porous sandstone, and Historic Scotland have placed restrictions on the preservation products we can use. The wet summer of 2017 hasn't helped. The way ahead is to strip off and re-apply the paint on the lower walls, possibly after a drying out period, and that we will look at forming a volunteer working party to do this during 2018.

BOILERS. There has been a problem with one of the two boilers, now rectified at a cost of £735. The engineer reports that the boilers 'should be good for another year'.

GUTTERS. The work to clean out the gutters and replace the down-pipe adjacent to the upper hall entrance is in hand.

RECTORY. The Cooks have moved out of the rectory, and were very appreciative that they had been given extra time to complete the process of moving the last of their belongings. Initial assessment of the building has confirmed the need for extensive refurbishment before the place is fit for re-occupancy. This will include a new kitchen, refurbished bathroom, rewiring and work on the heating. We are engaging contractors to provide estimates, and we are in touch with the diocese concerning grant applications.

FINANCIAL:

SETTING A BUDGET. The Bishop had requested that we present a 3 – 5-year budget, with a '10 year look ahead', which should accompany our 'profile' documents. This is a routine vacancy requirement aimed at us being able to demonstrate our viability, and most particularly to prove that we can afford to pay the stipend and other costs, as well as maintain our buildings. A rough draft based on figures from the latest accounts and our updated Property maintenance plan was discussed. The vestry is clear that St Michael's is viable financially, and it was agreed that a detailed budget displayed on a spread sheet would be created to demonstrate that we have fully thought through our financial commitments.

Vestry Report (continued)

FUNDRAISING. Kenny Macaulay asked about our fundraising efforts, which could not only increase our income, but could also work to expand our outreach. We have had some fundraising activity in the past, and it was agreed that we could encourage more in the future.

MISCELLANEOUS ISSUES:

WEBSITE. Henry Douglass has done a good job revitalizing the St Michael's website which is now 'live'. It was agreed that it will be essential for us all to keep our website current with up to date information.

FOODBANK SUPPORT. The Glasgow City Mission had thanked us for our Harvest contribution, kindly transported to the city by Richard Horrell. They have said they don't require further contributions until the New Year, and would be delighted to accept our further support from then if we are minded so to do. After discussion it was agreed that in future we should support the local foodbank based in Helensburgh which, together with the associated foodbank in Rosneath, supports around 40 families each month and probably reflects greater need. This is now being co-ordinated by Maggie Sheen.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:

The St Michael's AGM took place on 10th December. Chaired by the Vestry Secretary, the purpose of the AGM was to conduct elections, present the accounts and take any questions based on the reports which had been provided in advance.

ELECTIONS. Maggie Sheen and Richard Smith were elected as our Lay Representative and Alternate Lay Rep. Ann Andrew and Sheila Baker were elected to join the vestry, which brings the vestry up to strength.

ACCOUNTS. The Treasurer presented the accounts. Our unrestricted income exceeded our expenditure for the first time since 2010, which is good news. This was largely because of an increase in our congregational giving following the 2016 stewardship appeal, the restriction on our charitable giving from church funds to local charities only, and because of several generous donations given to cover some of the property projects in the past year. Although we will save on stipend and associated costs during the vacancy, we will have to spend a significant sum on rectory refurbishment, so there are no grounds for complacency. 'Clements' were re-appointed to conduct the 'independent

Vestry Report (continued)

check' of our accounts. Janina Duncan was thanked for the hard work she had done to prepare the accounts, and John Sadden was also thanked for his support to the Treasurer.

VACANCY. The Congregational Profile and Rector Profile documents were accepted as being finalised and it was agreed that they should be sent to the bishop for approval. The possibility of recruiting a half-stipendiary rector discussed. Although this is an attractive proposition financially, it was explained that we can afford to pay a full stipend, and that the vestry had, in consideration of our aspiration to grow, decided that we need someone full time. It was further stated that the bishop and the Dean had strongly advised that St Michael's should have a full stipendiary priest.

SERVICES DURING THE VACANCY. Kevin Boak thanked everyone for their support. We have been excellently served by visiting clergy to help taking services, and Pat Smith will be returning to Helensburgh in March, which is welcome. The Lay Reader was thanked for his service, including continuing with House Communion, which are much appreciated.

OTHER ISSUES RAISED.

RECTORY. The intended rectory refurbishment was discussed. Amongst the suggestions put forward for consideration were the need for an accessible church office, the importance of making the rectory eco-friendly, the need for some sort of stowage/shed in the garden, making best use of the grounds, and the possibility of letting out part of the rectory. The vestry will consider these ideas. The refurbishment needs to be affordable, but we are currently saving on stipend and associated costs, and we will apply for grants from the diocese.

COFFEE/TEA SERVERY IN THE UPPER HALL. A strong case was made to get this done as soon as possible, and the pressing need for this was noted, but it will need to be affordable.

HELENSBURGH ADVERTISER. A case was made to advertise our services in the local paper. We used to do this, and it might attract newcomers, although these days people increasingly go to our newly refurbished website for information. The vestry will consider the matter.

FINALLY. There was a vote of thanks to the Vestry for their service during the vacancy. In concluding the AGM, the Vestry Secretary thanked all those, too

Vestry Report (continued)

many to list individually, who each do their bit in so many different ways to make St Michael's such a successful community. *Nick Davies, Vestry Secretary*

Mothers' Union

After a very successful and profitable Songs of Praise which everyone seemed to enjoy, followed by a wonderful display of Nativity scenes from around the world, Mothers' Union is looking forward to a New Year and a varied selection of meetings:

Our first meeting is on **Thursday 18th January at 10:00am** when Nick Parry will be with us and we will be starting our Smalls for All campaign. In **February on Tuesday 6th at 1:45pm** Scottish Churches Housing Action will be telling us about their work and on **Thursday 15th at 10:00am** Heartstart will be showing us evidence of their local activities. We go Sailing with Derek Spall on Tuesday 6 March at 1.45 pm combined with our AGM when I will be stepping down as Branch Leader. In the meantime, Angela Russell will be leading our meetings.

So far, this season we have sent away 114 bonding squares for use in maternity hospitals, provided emergency packs for the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Paisley and written cards for prisoners.

There are many people to thank for the success of our recent ventures – having 60 schoolchildren aged 4, 5 or 6 years old in the church was a heartening experience as there are now at least 60 children in this area who have been in a church and learned about the organ, font etc as well as increasing their awareness of the real reason for Christmas. At least one child came back with a parent and showed how much she had learned from her visit. There were also over 60 visitors to the church during the week. Special thanks to Kevin and the Vestry for allowing us to arrange these events; to Derek Spall for coaxing a temperamental heating system into providing heat in the church every day for a week; to Barbara Hoey who thought up the Crib Fest idea in the first place and all those who lent nativities, supervised during the week and cleaned up after us; plus, thanks to all those people I have left out! Thanks are due also to the choir, the organists, those who chose the hymns, the readers and Pippa Reid-Foster for making the Songs of Praise such a joyful occasion.

I have very much enjoyed leading this branch over the last 3 years and seeing it grow. Please remember that membership is not essential, and anyone can come along to our meetings. You will be made very welcome.

Joan Thompson, Branch Leader

CALENDAR FOR JANUARY

JANUARY

Tuesday 2nd January

* NO 10:30 am Communion *

Sunday 7th January – Epiphany

8:00am Communion from Reserved

Sacrament (1970 Rite)

9:30-10:00am Open Spirit Contemporary Worship

10:30-11:15am Sunday clubs for children

10:30-11:30am Service of the Word

featuring Mission Action Plan and signing Year 3 Plan

6:30pm Prayer Book Choral Evensong

Tuesday 9th January – Feast-Day of Kentigern (Mungo) c 603

9:15-9:45am Church Prayer Group

10:30am Communion from Reserved

Sacrament (1970 Rite)

Friday 12th January

Rambling Club – Walk and Annual Dinner

Sunday 14th January – Second of Epiphany

8:00am Communion from Reserved

Sacrament (1970 Rite)

9:30-10:00am Open Spirit Contemporary Worship

10:30-11:15am Sunday clubs for children

10:30-11:30am Communion from

Reserved Sacrament (1982 Rite)

6:30pm Prayer Book Choral Evensong

6:30pm Prayer Book Choral Evensong

Monday 15th January

7:30pm Vestry meeting in Trinity Chapel

Tuesday 16th January

9:15-9:45am Church Prayer Group

10:30am Communion from Reserved

Sacrament (1970 Rite)

2:30pm Bible Study at West Duhill

Drive

Wednesday 17th January

January Day of Prayer for Mission Action

Planning, Trinity Chapel All Day

Thursday 18th January

10:00am Mothers' Union – Nick Parry

Sunday 21st January – Third of Epiphany

8:00am Communion from Reserved

Sacrament (1970 Rite)

9:30-10:00am Open Spirit Contemporary

Worship

10:30-11:15am Sunday clubs for children

10:30-11:30am Sung Eucharist (1982 Rite)

6:30pm Prayer Book Choral Evensong

Tuesday 23rd January – Conversion of Paul, Apostle

9:15-9:45am Church Prayer Group

10:30am Communion from Reserved

Sacrament (1970 Rite)

Sunday 28th January – Fourth of Epiphany

8:00am Communion from Reserved

Sacrament (1970 Rite)

9:30-10:00am Open Spirit Contemporary

Worship

10:30-11:15am Sunday clubs for children

10:30-11:30am Sung Eucharist (1982 Rite)

6:30pm Prayer Book Choral Evensong

Tuesday 30th January – Feast-Day of Charles, King and Martyr 1649

9:15-9:45am Church Prayer Group

10:30am Communion from Reserved

Sacrament (1970 Rite)

2:30pm Bible Study at West Duhill

Drive

Change of Timing

/FEBRUARY 2018

FEBRUARY

Thursday 1st February

10:30am Monthly Coffee Morning

Saturday 3rd February

9:00am Rambling Club – Killearn

Sunday 4th February – Second Before Lent

8:00am Communion from Reserved

Sacrament (1970 Rite)

9:30-10:00am Open Spirit Contemporary

Worship

10:30-11:15am Sunday clubs for children

10:30-11:30am Service of the Word

featuring Helensburgh and Lomond

Foodbank

6:30pm Prayer Book Choral Evensong

Tuesday 6th February – Accession of HM The Queen

9:15-9:45am Church Prayer Group

10:30am Communion from Reserved

Sacrament (1970 Rite)

1:45pm MU with SCHA

Sunday 11th February – Next Before Lent

8:00am Communion from Reserved

Sacrament (1970 Rite)

9:30-10:00am Open Spirit Contemporary

Worship

10:30-11:15am Sunday clubs for children

10:30-11:30am Sung Eucharist (1982 Rite)

6:30pm Prayer Book Choral Evensong

Tuesday 13th February – Shrove Tuesday

9:15-9:45am Church Prayer Group

10:30am Communion from Reserved

Sacrament (1970 Rite)

2:30pm Bible Study at West Duhill

Drive

Ash Wednesday 14th February

7:30pm* Eucharist and imposition of

Ashes (*Time to be confirmed)

Thursday 15th February

10:00am Mothers' Union Heartstart

Sunday 18th February – First of Lent

8:00am Communion from Reserved

Sacrament (1970 Rite)

9:30-10:00am Open Spirit Cont. Worship

10:30-11:15am Sunday clubs for children

10:30-11:30am Communion from

Reserved Sacrament (1982 Rite)

6:30pm Prayer Book Choral Evensong

Tuesday 20th February

9:15-9:45am Church Prayer Group

10:30am Communion from Reserved

Sacrament (1970 Rite)

Wednesday 21st February

February Day of Prayer for Mission Action

Planning, Trinity Chapel All Day

Saturday 24th February

9:00am Rambling Club – Killin

10:30am-12:30pm Messy Church in URC

Church Hall

Sunday 25th February – Second of Lent

8:00am Communion from Reserved

Sacrament (1970 Rite)

9:30-10:00am Open Spirit Contemporary

Worship

10:30-11:15am Sunday clubs for children

10:30-11:30am Sung Eucharist (1982 Rite)

6:30pm Prayer Book Choral Evensong

Tuesday 27th February

9:15-9:45am Church Prayer Group

10:30am Communion from Reserved

Sacrament (1970 Rite)

2:30pm Bible Study at West Duhill

Drive

Change of Timing

Eco-congregation

Many of you will be relieved to know that this is my last contribution to the Messenger as your Eco representative. It is high time I gave way to someone who is more able than I to know what type of practical projects this congregation would like to support locally and in the Lomond area. It has become clear to me that the few talents I have, lie elsewhere. I am extremely grateful to have had the chance to offer some thoughts on the vital connection between our faith in God the loving Creator of this beautiful world, our sinful use of it, and the catastrophic situation we find ourselves in 2017/18. On the second anniversary of the Paris Agreement on climate change which showed how we need to refrain from using any more fossil fuel if we want to survive as a species, the European Investment Bank is about to offer 1.5 billion euros to an alliance of companies for the laying of more pipe lines across Europe. At the same time scientists have shown how far we have already gone in clogging the oceans and poisoning the life therein by billions of tons of plastic.

The amount of CO2 in the atmosphere has now reached 403 parts per million which is higher than for millions of years and is already over the 400 ppm which the experts told us not to exceed. Fresh, potable water is rapidly being used up largely by industry and agriculture which gives the Western world (us) tons of stuff we do not need and food which we waste and grow fat on.

I have books around me entitled *The End of Nature* by Bill McKibben, and *The End of Food* by Paul Roberts, an analysis of the global food economy recommended by such diverse organs as the Glasgow Herald and the Economist. Today the Rev. Mitchell (Bungie) Bunting preached at our joint service with the URC and mentioned that we should not balk at John the Baptist eating locusts, since many of the world population already get their protein from insects, and we will have to do the same in the future.

Two years ago, I was in Edinburgh listening to the retiring Bishop of Liverpool James Jones addressing some Christian Business men on the global crisis. We in the West (Europe and especially the USA) are like a small group of very rich passengers on a cruise liner, finely dressed and luxuriously cabined, with plenty of good food and wine, and tip top entertainment and sports facilities, shops swimming pools and first-class health care. But below decks there are the vast majority either simply dying of hunger and thirst, or actively engaged in keeping the engines running, the dining rooms supplied, the heating and air-conditioning working, the laundries washing and drying, and the pools clean and topped up with chemicals, while going without the basic necessities themselves. Is it surprising that some people want to kill us off completely, while millions more simply want to come here and have what

Eco-congregation (continued)

we have before we have used it all up?

At COP 23 the latest climate summit in Bonn, there was a plea by those living on islands which are now under direct threat of inundation, so that many of the population have already moved off elsewhere, because the heating of the oceans has raised the sea levels. If the world leaders fail to heed these desperate pleas we will all suffer a similar fate.

I have also read of amazing things being done to reverse this horrific state of the planet, and my faith is strong in what humans can achieve. I do not hide from the possible devastation by hoping the Second Coming will somehow arrive before I have to suffer, but I do believe that the power of love and the Christian message of Christ's conquering of sin must be spread over the world. That is our main task, and we will only do it by living in a sustainable and planet-friendly way. No plastic if possible, no toxic chemicals; only sustainable energy; no new fossil fuel cars; making space and conditions to preserve space for wild life; eating much less meat..... we know what we have to do. I saw on the Franciscan Tertiary prayer website, one intercession which asked God our heavenly Father to tell the winds and oceans not to devastate her island home. Jesus did speak to the elements and they obeyed Him. This was one of the signs of His Godhead. Have we the faith to pray for God to help us save the Earth? He will show us how. *Selina McGeoch*

Open Spirit

Open Spirit resumed on the 29th October and has been regularly attended by a small but faithful following. The first service led by Helen Gibson explored our gifts and our hopes for Open Spirit using the analogy of a bulb blossoming into a flower after a period hidden underground. This was followed by a lively session led by Miriam and Ufo Sutter, where Ufo puzzled and delighted us with the mathematics of paper chains. Next Csaba Barthos spoke on aspects of love and in mid-November we were very grateful to Rosemary Wilson for joining us. Rosemary gave journals out for the young people and tasked them in diarying their relationship with God, telling us what a wonderful resource it is to look back on when we are older. On the last Sunday of the liturgical year, in a nod to the Anglican tradition of 'Stir Up Sunday,' we learned about Christ the King, made butter icing and decorated fairy cakes, which were very kindly baked by Barbara, Joy and Sam. It was an activity enjoyed by all. The following week, Margaret Wardil led us in decorating a nativity scene for the Crib Festival and we are very grateful to Joy Boak for providing outfits for the wooden figures. This week Bob and Linda Floyd led a 'Countdown to Christmas.' We had great fun trying to decipher 9 letter words related to Advent

Open Spirit (continued)

and the Nativity with the Countdown music providing a suitable level of pressure! The services will continue up to Christmas Eve and restart in the New Year. You are very welcome to join us to experience this all age worship and if you have ideas for services (activities, talks or themes) please let Helen Gibson know (01436 820678). The Bishop has asked that all those leading the service are PVG certified. Many thanks to all those who have participated in keeping Open Spirit going and, last and not least, many thanks go out to Margaret Wardil, who has been organising the tea and coffee. *Helen Gibson*

St. Michaels' Website

The Website www.stmichaelhelensburgh.org.uk and Facebook Page - st michael & all angels church - helensburgh

Some of you will have noticed changes to the Website and Facebook pages. At the end of October 2017 the website was upgraded to a new platform using WordPress. This was done to remove some damaged material and to provide us with a better platform to maintain the site ourselves without incurring further design costs. Henry Douglass is responsible for the site's and the Facebook page's presentation and content.

Above all we want to see that these sources of information about our church and our community are relevant and up to date. If you are responsible for, or just a member of one of our many groups, we want you to provide some input please, text and announcements are good, photos and images are even better.

Send them to info@stmichaelhelensburgh.org.uk or call Henry on 07508 122 866.

You may like to know that in November there were almost 500 'visits' to the website and over 130 'visits' to Facebook with 110 likes, comments, or content sharing.

Perhaps we may be reaching people who would otherwise not be able to keep up to date, as well as helping people in the congregation to do so too. *Henry Douglas*

Bishop Gregor's Christmas Message

St John 1.14: and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ...

We're all familiar with slogans, mottoes, catchphrases, strap lines, by which institutions or political parties or campaigning groups like to promote themselves, their claims, their values among the rest of us. Some of them may strike us as important and even challenging – I certainly, for example, find that to be true of Christian Aid's strap line, *we believe in life before death*. And I've always loved the motto of the University of Oxford,



Bishop Gregor's Christmas Message (continued)

where I studied for my degree in theology: *Dominus illuminatio mea, the Lord is my light*.

Well, I think that the word *flesh* was a kind of strapline for the Christian communities among which the Gospel of St John came to be written, say, in the second half of the first century CE. The most celebrated use of it we hear proclaimed in the gospel every year at Midnight Mass: *the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*. But we also find it in the letters of St John, closely related to the Gospel, where it is said that true believers always confess that Jesus Christ came *in the flesh*. Indeed so important was this little word *flesh* to these Johannine Christians that they went so far as to claim that those who would not say that Jesus came in the flesh were Antichrist, just about the worst thing you *could* say about anyone, from a Christian point of view, right up to the present day.

The thing is, though, that this coming in the flesh isn't just important to St John's Christian communities. It's not just a matter of what they thought all those centuries ago. Not at all. It has remained of absolutely fundamental importance to all Christian people ever since and is at the very heart of our Christmas celebrations, every year, which is why traditionally the reader of the gospel makes a deep bow at these words and why people used to kneel for the words *and was made man* in the Creed. Really, Christmas simply isn't conceivable, isn't possible without St John's joyous affirmation that *God the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*.

Why is that so? Why should such a small word matter so very much? Well, for St John and his communities of Christians *flesh* was important because it meant to them our human life, so that when he says that God becomes flesh he wants us to understand that in Jesus Christ God lives out our human life from the inside. We call this the Incarnation, God with a skin if you like, and it's what Christmas is all about. God so loves us, so wants us to make the most of the lives given us, by drawing us to God's own life, that it is a case of becoming God with us, God one of us, flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone. God wants to be as close to us as possible and that means beginning life as we do, utterly dependent on other people. Not God commanding us from afar with overwhelming power, but in our midst loving us in the weakness and vulnerability of a human child. This is how much God loves us fleshly human beings and, as the divine life among us unfolds, we know the cost of that love, the height, the depth, the self-giving of that love.

As we celebrate once more that immense love God has for us and for the whole world, we must know ourselves called to love God in return. And a big part of that is to love ourselves and all around us as we are loved by God, to love ourselves and those around us because we are all loved so much by God and so precious to God.

This we are called to do in and for a world that can often seem very far away from /...18

ST MICHAEL'S RAMBLING CLUB

WALKS JANUARY TO MAY 2018

Walks are on Saturdays and start outside St Michael's Church at 9 am unless otherwise indicated by the leaders of the individual walks.

DATE	GRADE	WALK	LEADER
12 th January	Easy	Gartocharn RSPB Nature Reserve and/or Duncryne Hill Dinner at the Ardencaple Hotel	Frankie 678490 Maureen 674763
3 rd February	Easy/ Moderate	Killearn circular	John 675010
24 th February	Various	Killin	Frankie 678490
10 th March	Various	Lendrick Hill and Stuc Odhar (Brig o' Turk)	James 675541
24 th March	Easy	Canal and Antonine Wall from Achinstarry	Maureen 674763
14 th April	Moderate /Easy	Ardcastle Wood and Crarae Garden	John 675010
28 th April	Moderate	Houston Gryfe and Bridge of Weir	Maureen 674763
12 th May	Various	Ben More Gardens and A'Cruach	James 675541
15-18 th May	Various	May Break to Pitlochry	James 675541

Note that the Dinner and walk is on the **Friday**.

The grades shown are subject to change following a recce, but walks will normally have an easier and harder options available which may not have been fully investigated.

Queries about individual walks to the Leader.

A Thought

Aging ramblers may take heart from last Sunday's reading from Isaiah: "Every valley shall be lifted up and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level" So, there's hope for us all! *James Ashby*

LECTIONARY – JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2018

Sunday	Eucharist	Evensong
7 th Jan Epiphany	Isaiah 60:1-6 Ephesians 3:1-12 Matthew 2:1-12	Isaiah 49:1-7 Revelation 21:22-27 Psalm 89:20-29
14 th Jan Epiphany 2	1 Samuel 3:1-20 Revelation 5:1-10 John 1:43-51	Isaiah 60:9-22 Galations 1:11-24 Psalm 145:1-12
21 st Jan Epiphany 3	Genesis 14:17-20 Revelation 19:6-10 John 2:1-11	Jeremiah 3:21-42 1 Peter 1:3-12 Psalm 113
28 th Jan Epiphany 4	Deuteronomy 18:15-20 Revelation 12:1-5a Mark 1:21-28	1 Samuel 3:1-20 1 Corinthians 14:12-20 Psalm 71:1-6,15-17
4 th Feb 2 nd Before Lent	Proverbs 8:1,22-31 Colossians 1:15-20 John 1:1-14	Numbers 13:1-2,27-33 Philippians 2:12-28 Psalm 4
11 th Feb Next before Lent	2 Kings 2:1-12 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 Mark 9:2-9	Numbers 20:1-13 Philippians 3:17-21 Psalm 6
18 th Feb Lent 1	Genesis 9:8-17 1 Peter 3:18-22 Mark 1:9-15	Genesis 2:15-17,3:1-7 Romans 10:8b-13 Psalm 17-32
25 th Feb Lent 2	Genesis 17:1-7,15-16 Romans 4:13-25 Mark 8:31-38	Genesis 12:1-9 Hebrews 11:1-3,8-16 Psalm 74

The Paintings of Tom Allison

**Saturday January 20th 2:00-4:30pm and Sunday January 21st 12 noon-2.30pm
at St Michael's Church Hall.**

Before he died, Tom requested that his paintings be given to St Michael's church and sold with the proceeds gifted to the church.

This is your opportunity to see Tom's pictures and if you wish, to own one.

The front cover of this magazine shows one of his paintings. *Chris Packard*

READERS' LIST – JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2018

DATE	8:00am	10:30am	6:30pm
7 th Jan	Selina McGeoch	Chris Packard	Maureen McCormack
14 th Jan	Henry Douglas	Julie Siemens	David Ronald
21 st Jan	Penny Johnston	Helen Gibson	Jill Braid
28 th Jan	Liz Sanderson	Richard Smith	John Sadden
4 th Feb	Nigel Allan	James Ashby	Joan Sadden
11 th Feb	John MacCallum	Jill Braid	Margaret Gilbert
18 th Feb	Chris Sanders	Trevor Quickfall	Penny Johnston
25 th Feb	Selina McGeoch	John Lewis	Maurice Steuart-Corry

Bishop Gregor's Christmas Message (continued)

love, life and hope. We see so much hatred, so much holding of human life not as precious but as cheap and insignificant, so much torn and wounded and abused flesh, so many shattered lives, so much cruelty, so much indifference to suffering, so much pitiless killing of the innocent. Christmas is not about escaping from all of that. Apart from anything else it is all anyhow embedded in our Christmas celebration as it unfolds – after all, on the second day of Christmas we find ourselves commemorating the terrible stoning to death of St Stephen and then two days later the slaughter of the children of Bethlehem at Herod's command.

The thing is, of course, that the Word made flesh, Jesus himself, from the very start of his life among us, as his family fled for their lives as refugees into Egypt, faced in the world he loved the same lovelessness and cruelty that we face. He knows what that's like and He is with us in our Christmas celebration and throughout our lives to encourage us always to keep faith, to hold to love, and goodness and truth and beauty, to hold to *God's* vision of the preciousness of all *God's* children, whose flesh *God* shares, whose lives *God* cherishes and whose love *God* desires, always and for ever.

I wish you all a very happy and blessed Christmas.

+Gregor

Church Group Leaders

Contact People/Organisers

Sunday Club		
Crèche	Pauline and Ray Williams	673944
Infants, Juniors Plus	Joy Boak	676852
Sidespersons	Vacant	
Bellringers	Kitty Fleming	676963
Reading (Lessons) Rota	Nigel Allan	671875
Cleaning Co-ordinator	Barbara Hoey	671718
Visiting Co-ordinator	Vacant	
Flowers	Sue Ashby	675541
Intercessions Rota, Laundry, Soft		
Fabrics and Chief Sacristan	Joan Sadden	672422
Sunday Coffee Rota	Margaret Horrell	676936
BRF (Bible Reading Fellowship Notes)	Marion Blake	673960
Mothers' Union Branch Leader	Joan Thompson	423451
USPG	Marion Blake	673960
Keep Fit/ Hall Convener/		
Monthly Coffee Morning Rota	Maureen Kyle	672951
Eco Congregation	Selina McGeoch	676074
Hill walking and Rambling Club	James Ashby	675541
Traidcraft	Jo Scott	01389 849145
Vale of Leven Hospital Tea Bar	Judith Adams	672477
St Michael's Art Group	John MacCallum	673521
Magazine Editor	Richard Smith	831644
Website	Henry Douglass	674763

Ask how to join or help. Perhaps bring new ideas for new activities
You will be welcome. Please let the editor know if any changes are needed.