

ALLAN PARK SOUTH CHURCH



December 2015—January 2016
NEWSLETTER



Glory

to the newborn
King

The Minister and Kirk Session take this opportunity
to wish all our members and friends a Merry
Christmas and all good wishes for the New Year.



'Jesus - God's grace for everyone'

Scottish Charity No. SC001414



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FROM THE MINISTER

“And while they were there, the time came to pass for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.” (Luke 2: 6-7).

There is no doubt that the birth of Jesus went largely un-noticed. For most, he was just another baby born into the world, like all the other babies born that day. Of course we know with hindsight, that there were several other things which marked out this birth as being unusual. This birth was spoken of by the prophets. It was announced by angels and welcomed by simple shepherds and magnificent magi.

Brennan Manning said of the birth that it was “the decisive breakthrough of the passionate love of God in Jesus” which is now at work in the lives of those who choose to believe this.

Such a decisive breakthrough of Divine Love means that things would never be the same again. This love's power is now reconfiguring human nature to the way human nature was intended to be. Jesus was born as the first true human and brought truth to humanity.

To quote Brennan Manning again, "God comes as a new-born baby, giving us a chance to love him, making us feel that we have something to give him."

Each of us was made to exist in relationship with God's love and we do have something to give him, and to give each other, and that is our consent. We must choose to receive the birth of Christ's love in us and choose to extend this love to others. That's what makes us truly human and that's who we truly are.

May God's love in Christ be born anew in you this Christmas and may his love birth a new season of freedom, joy and peace for all of us as we begin 2016.

In love,

Alistair





Christ-mas

is coming

**An opportunity to explore the
message of Christmas through
craft, food and song**

**Sunday 6 December
3-5pm**

No charge. Everyone welcome.

Stirling: Allan Park South Church

JUST A THOUGHT....

According to the Alaska Department of fish and game, while both male and female reindeer grow antlers in the summer each year, male reindeer drop their antlers at the beginning of winter, usually late November to mid December. Female reindeer, however, retain their antlers until after they give birth in the Spring. Therefore, according to every historical rendition depicting Santa's reindeer, every single one of them, from Rudolph to Blitzen.....had to be female. We should have known this Only women would be able to drag a large man in a red velvet suit all around the world in one night without getting lost!

A very Merry Christmas to you all!

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NOTES FROM THE KIRK SESSION

Bairns Rock continues to be well supported with 31 children recorded at one recent session.

The Minister reported that three prayer walks had been held in the parish. It was hoped to continue these next year during the lighter evenings.

The Baker Street nursery would be holding their Christmas carol service in the Church on Wednesday 11th December.

Members and friends of the Congregation are invited to participate in carol singing on Sunday 20th December from 3-5pm outside the Thistle Centre at the foot of King Street.

The Session agreed that the shrubs and trees outside the large hall were becoming overgrown to the point at which the footpath was being blocked. Our Church gardener, Don Pollock would be asked to reduce these to a more manageable size. At the time of writing, this task has been completed.

Bannockburn Roofing would shortly be carrying out their annual roof and drainage inspection.

Arthur McDonald reported that the Presbytery office would be moving from Bridge of Allan to St Columba's Church, Stirling.

Sally Forshaw had applied for a grant on behalf of the Church for redecoration of the Pillar hall prior to the launch of the lunch club at the start of the New Year.

The Alpha course had just begun and was being attended by six people.

The recent Harvest collection on behalf of WaterAid had amounted to £194. Some of this total was gift-aided so the charity would benefit further.

Following a systems crash, the Church website was temporarily offline. The Session was pleased to note that normal service had resumed.

The next meeting of the Kirk Session will be at 7 pm on Tuesday 12th January in the Church office. All members of the Congregation are welcome to attend.



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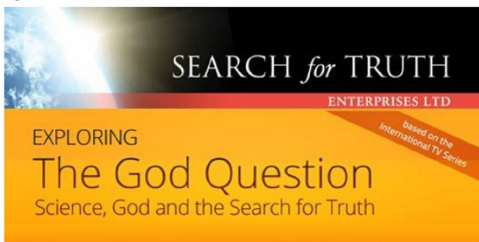
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THE GOD QUESTION

On Wednesday 18th of November, Allan Park South was delighted to host a 'pop-up' event, organised by Stirling Presbytery, and entitled 'The God Question'. The series is an initiative of **Search for Truth Charitable Trust**, set up in 2008 and based in Scotland, UK. Since 2015, in some territories, the



series has the title **Science vs God?**

In an increasingly secular world where Christianity is being marginalised and the views of other groups are gaining prominence, the core question put by the two speakers, Professor John Spence and Ian Morris, was 'Are we the products of chance or intention?' Even some prominent atheists describe it as "the biggest question of all!" The greatest challenge to belief is often thought to come from science! This TV series investigates whether 21st century science supports the case for a creator or, instead, removes it! On the street there's a mixture of confusion and assumption. Out there, it is mostly assumed that with every scientific breakthrough, God is more and more redundant. Yet instinctively, the vast majority of people in the world feel "there must be something". Well, is there? What's the evidence? That's the territory of The God Question series and is explained in the first section entitled '**The Cosmos.**'

The series examines two further key areas:

Life and Evolution
Mind and Consciousness

Life and Evolution:

For centuries there had seemed no way of understanding how life had emerged and developed on earth other than it being God's handiwork. BUT with Charles Darwin and his theory of evolution there was a seismic shift – one that, ever since, seems to have diminished God. Examining this proposition is at the heart of Life, Evolution and The God Question.

Mind and Consciousness:

The brain is not only the personal HQ of every individual, it is also the source of a deep mystery. How does it link to our sense of being conscious human beings with a sense of the past, the present, the future and of each other? Science is unable to explain why consciousness exists or what it is.



Around 36 hardy souls came out on a very wet Wednesday evening to participate and the various questions which followed gave testament to the interesting subject matter. As with all 'pop-up' events, the evening closed at 9pm although many stayed on to discuss the matter further.

The Church has decided to purchase the DVD boxed set, study guide and leaders manual and will perhaps look to offer a course of discussion in the future. For those with an internet connection, further information can be found at: www.thegodquestion.tv/explore

Edward Morton



CHURCH PARKING



Members of the Church who make use of parking facilities in the grounds are reminded that their permits fall due for renewal before the end of December. The suggested donation is £70 per car per year but this can be varied depending on individual circumstances. The money raised by this cause, (£1040 in 2014) forms an important part of the Church income, particularly for Gift Aid subscribers since we can reclaim an additional 25% of tax paid.

If you would like further information, or wish to renew your permit, please let me know.

Edward Morton

WELLBEING CHOIR

Interviews for the position of choir leader will take place on Thursday 3rd December, a position made possible by the grant we received from 'Go For It' to fund this pilot project.

Singing together is a great way to lift your spirit and reduce your stress levels. There can be a sense of community in a choir: like a hive of bees buzzing together in harmony! There is evidence that suggests that participants in music making can experience beneficial effects relating to health issues in a range of specific areas: memory, some breathing related conditions, depression, anxiety, confidence, energy, self esteem, general wellbeing and happiness. The idea is to combine music and some movement. It is open to anyone, but will in particular try to attract people who have experienced health and/or social problems.



The choir leader will have the support of a small advisory group from APS Church. Up to 10 different songs will be taught, most with some harmony and movement. The songs will be a mixture of Christian, Scottish and contemporary. If you would like to participate or to find out more, please speak to Alistair whose contact details may be found on the outside back cover of this newsletter.

Edward Morton

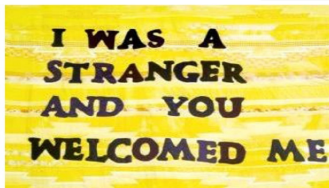
A STRANGER IN OUR MIDST

How do I welcome people into the Church? That was the question that I asked myself after my brother Tom and I returned to Stirling. We had lived and worshipped within a small rural Parish, just over the border in Berwick upon Tweed. On returning to Stirling we decided that the only way for us to make a reasoned, prayerful judgement about where we should worship was to visit a variety of churches within the Stirling area. When you visit a Church that is new to you, you approach it with a fresh pair of eyes. And sometimes it is surprising what you see.

Most of the Churches were welcoming, but in some cases no-one talked to us and we walked out the same way as we had entered. We had no idea what was going on in their Church because no-one had taken the time to tell us. Then there were the suspicious looks, when it was obvious that we were strangers in these here parts, including the odd nudge and nod towards these questionable new faces. One lady even clasped her handbag to her, and glared at me in case I had any thoughts of purloining her collection. And yes, sad to say, someone did indeed ask us to move as that was 'her pew,' despite there being an empty one in front.

How difficult would it have been if these experiences had happened to someone who had plucked up the courage to come into the Church for the first time? Would we have seen their heels for dust? It made me very aware of how important it is to welcome visitors to our Church, to greet them and smile because it may be the only opportunity that we get. As Hebrews 13:1 states 'Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.' Whether in jeans or suit, old or young, rich or poor, we all have the right to share in God's fellowship and love.

Tom and Julie Christie



GIFT AID

Dear Gift Aid Donor,

HMRC has recently updated their guidance on Gift Aid donations so I would be very grateful if you would take a minute to read this letter. For 99% of all donors, the contents of this advice will make no difference whatsoever and you may have no need to worry.

Full details are available on the HMRC website <https://www.gov.uk/topic/running-charity/money-accounts/latest> and I would encourage you to explore this further if you have any concerns.

The most important criteria for any 'Gift Aider' is that you **MUST** have paid in tax at least the amount the Charity is reclaiming. For most people this will be Income Tax but Capital Gains tax is also allowed.

An example might be as follows: If the sum you give is (say) £100, the charity grosses this up to £125 by reference to the 20% basic rate and reclaims the tax of £25 from HMRC. And that's not all. If you pay income tax at 40% or 45%, you can reclaim the difference between the basic rate and your marginal rate through PAYE or self-assessment. Thus a 40% taxpayer giving £100 net can claim higher rate tax relief of £25 (that's 20% of £125), while a 45% taxpayer donating the same sum can claim additional rate tax relief of £31.25 (25% of £125). From 6 April 2016 onwards, rates of relief for Scottish taxpayers will be derived from the Scottish rate of income tax.

So in the first example given above where a donor gives £100 to the Church, he or she **MUST** ensure that they have paid **AT LEAST** £25 tax in that year. If they have paid a lesser amount in tax, the Revenue is entitled to reclaim the difference from the donor!

And it doesn't stop there! Have you for example ever visited a National Trust site and been invited to 'Gift Aid' your entrance fee, or even donated clothes via polythene bags delivered through your letterbox and been invited to 'Gift Aid' it? Most of us would believe that we are doing 'our bit' to help the Charity but the same rules still apply!

All Charitable organisations must include the donor's Name, House number (or name) and their Postcode to make a successful claim for Gift Aid. HMRC records all these details and if the value of your Gift Aided donations exceed the amount you have paid in tax, **YOU**, not the Charity, are liable for the difference!

This letter of guidance is given for advice only and certainly should not be seen as scaremongering! Allan Park South Church could not survive without the generosity of our Gift Aid Donors and I take this opportunity of thanking each and every one of you on behalf of the Kirk Session for your continued support. No responsibility whatsoever is taken for the guidance given above. If you are in any doubt as to whether it affects you, advice should be sought from a financial advisor, or directly from HMRC

HMRC has recently updated their Declaration form so included with your copy of this newsletter is a new one to complete. I would ask that existing Gift Aid donors return this to me as soon as possible. If you are not using this type of giving, I ask that you give it your prayerful consideration. If you would like to find out more, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Please remember that a very convenient method of giving is by using a bank standing order. This means that if you are on holiday, the Church does not lose out. From the Church's point of view, it makes financial planning much easier since we know when to expect your offering.

Edward Morton

NEW BIBLE STUDY HOUSE GROUP

A new group has started, meeting on the first and third Wednesdays of the month from 7 - 8.30pm. Everyone is welcome. The group is being led by the Rev Don Cameron at the moment, and is looking at the book of Acts. The venue is the Manse at 22 Laurelhill Place unless stated otherwise in the weekly notices.

TRAIDCRAFT

Future Traidcraft dates are as follows:

20th December
17th January
21st February
20th March

Your support is very much appreciated.



Hugh Buchanan



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PRAYER MEETINGS

On a Thursday from 9.10—10.10am we have a small gathering to pray for the church and community. This takes place in the prayer room beneath the stage in the large hall. Please come along if you can or join us by praying at home at that time.

SUNDAY EVENING WORSHIP SERVICE

Every Sunday at 6.30pm — an open and participatory Spirit led gathering for prayer and praise held in the sanctuary.

OIKOS CAFÉ & JOB CLUB

The Oikos café is open every Thursday morning from 10.30– Noon and all are welcome. The job club also runs at this time.

NEWSLETTER

If you no longer wish to receive a newsletter, or if you'd prefer to receive it by email, then please contact Ed Morton, edmort@aol.com or 01259 760861.

ALLAN PARK HOUSE

Services are held on the third Wednesday of each month except January.

THE BOYS'S BRIGADE

The Boys' Brigade is urgently seeking a leader for the new Company Section. If this is something you could do, please contact Ian McCallum whose details are on the back cover of this newsletter.

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PASTORAL REPORT

BY DEATH

Mrs Netta Cunningham from Stirling.

Mrs Debbie Hogg from Stirling.

HOW SILENTLY....

How silently they tumble down
And come to rest upon the ground
To lay a carpet, rich and rare,
Beneath the trees without a care,
Content to sleep, their work well done,
Colours gleaming in the sun.
At other times, they wildly fly
Until they nearly reach the sky.
Twisting, turning through the air
Till all the trees stand stark and bare.
Exhausted, drop to earth below
To wait, like children, for the snow



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DATE	READINGS	DATE	READINGS
Sunday 6th December	Malachi 3: 1-4 St Matthew 3: 1-12	Sunday 7th February	Exodus 34: 29-35 St Luke 9: 28-36
Sunday 13th December	Isaiah 12: 2-6 St Matthew 11: 2-11	Sunday 14th February	Deuteronomy 26: 1-11 St Luke 4: 1-13
Sunday 20th December	Psalms 80: 1-7 St John 5: 24-37a	Sunday 21st February	Genesis 15: 1-12 & 17-18 St Luke 13: 31-35
Sunday 27th December	Psalms 148 St Luke 2: 22-41	Sunday 28th February	Isaiah 55: 1-9 St Luke 13: 1-9
Sunday 3rd January	Jeremiah 31: 7-14 St John 1: 1-9	Sunday 6th March	Joshua 5: 9-12 St Luke 15: 1-3
Sunday 10th January	Isaiah 43: 1-7 St Luke 3: 15-17 & 21-22	Sunday 13th March	Isaiah 43: 16-21 St John 12: 1-8
Sunday 17th January	Isaiah 62: 1-5 St John 2: 1-11	Sunday 20th March	Psalms 118: 1-2 & 19-29 St Luke 19: 28-40
Sunday 24th January	Nehemiah 8: 1-3 & 5-6 & 8-10 St Luke 4: 14-21	Sunday 27th March	Isaiah 65: 17-25 St John 20: 1-18
Sunday 31st January	Jeremiah 1: 4-10 St Luke 4: 21-30	Sunday 3rd April	Acts 5: 27-32 St John 20: 19-31

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

We very much appreciate contributions to this newsletter and are extremely grateful for any received but are always looking for new insights. If you feel up to writing a piece then please get in contact with me. Supporting photographs are especially welcomed!

Edward Morton

TO BE SURE AND STEDFAST OR TO SEEK, SERVE AND FOLLOW?



Consider this question. In our life and Christian witness, are we called to be, like the lighthouse, firmly fastened to the rock below and showing others where it is? Or are we to be more like the tug boat, fast, powerful and manoeuvrable; ready to guide, help and steer others in the right direction? Or to put it another way, should we be *sure and stedfast*; or should we *seek, serve and follow*?

We are all familiar with the words in the title; but over the years (and no doubt many sermons, talks and devotions); we may have become numb to our mottoes and the various “catchy gimmicks” that are used to work them into a talk. How often do we think about the meaning? Are they still relevant, or a relic of a bygone era? We have catchy new straplines - “the adventure begins here” and “be part of something big”; so why do we need mottoes? And are they still the right mottoes for us?



“Surely our mottoes represent good values?”, you say. “*Sure and stedfast*’ is in the bible!” Maybe. “*Stedfast*” is an old-fashioned word. It was old-fashioned when it was chosen, and even with a controversial spelling change a few years back, is still not a common word. It means un-moving, anchored, fastened. Adding “*sure*” just confirms a firm un-changing shackle. Does that mean we’re firmly stuck in the past – never to change?



It needn't be like that. We could “*seek*” new methods, different activities, uniforms, badges, names. We could “*serve*” the latest whims of our members, their parents, or demands of society in general. Or we could “*follow*” the trends. – What are young people “in to” these days? What's

“cool”? What are others doing? How could we mimic that to grow bigger and better?

And there are many who would agree with both these assessments of our mottoes. Maybe we are stuck in the past – maybe we should be chasing the latest trend. But there was one word missing from the Girls' Brigade's motto. Christ.



Jesus is the one who connects our movements. We do not just “*Seek, Serve and Follow*” - we seek, serve and follow Christ. He is our firm foundation. It is in Him that our hope is *sure and steadfast*. That may be an old fashioned idea – but so it should be! Jesus died 2,000 years ago: so the Good News is actually quite old news – and He's been around since the beginning of time as the Word of God; the creator of heaven and earth - but God's word is still fresh and relevant, as the prologue to John's Gospel tell us ...

¹At the first o aa things was the Word, an the Word was God his sel. ²The vera same was at the first wi God. ³Aa things war o his makin; an but for him was nae thing made that wqs made. ⁴Life was in him; and the life was man's licht. ⁵An the licht glintit throu the mirk, but the mirk fail't tae tak haud o it.



We should each *seek, serve and follow Christ* in all that we do – and at the same time, remain *sure and steadfast* in our faith and hope in Christ – because that is where our strength lies. We may have different mottoes and objects, different histories, methods and target audience; but our ultimate aim is the same; and our help comes from the Lord that made heaven and earth.

A few years ago, I was beginning to doubt the value of what I was doing. I was Captain of a small Company; we try to do a lot for the Boys (some things, quite innovative); we've added activities to the programme that the Boys asked for – but the numbers (particularly in Company Section) were stubbornly low, and I had a small and dwindling staff.

So I prayed for a sign. Psalm 127:1 says “*Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain*”. I asked God to show me if I was “*labouring in vain*”, and expected an answer.

Instead of reading the bible, I'd got into the habit of listening to it. Some years previously, I'd realised I didn't have time during the day to read, but at the time spent a lot of time travelling for work – so I thought there must be some sort of audio bible I could have on my phone, and listen to on planes, while walking, or in the subway. I found the Daily Audio Bible - an online

community where one man reads every day; reading through the whole bible in a year; using a different version each week.

So, a few days after praying about whether to stick with the Company or give it up, I was listening to the Daily Audio Bible, when I heard 1 Corinthians 15:58:

⁵⁸Therefore, my dear brothers, be stedfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord's work, knowing that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.

Wow! Not only had God heard my prayer, and provided an answer using the same words as I'd used in the question, so I would recognise it – but he'd also thrown in “*stedfast*” to attract my attention, and make sure I was in no doubt.

We're still not a big Company; but shortly after this confirmation, new people volunteered, staff that had moved away came back, and numbers started to grow. We're still trying new things (the Boy in the photo is one of our Seniors, taking part in an FDF competition in Copenhagen: we were the first foreign participants in this event) – but we're not just trying things in the sense of trying to find the “magic” solution that will make us big and “successful” – we're doing new things to make the experience better for the Boys we have, in the assurance that we're not doing so in vain, and God wants us to stick with it!

But what about those trendy strap-lines? “*The adventure begins here*”, and “*Be part of something big*”. When you think about it; they actually fit perfectly with the mottoes.

If we earnestly *seek, serve and follow Christ*; we're off on a fantastic adventure – and where better to begin that adventure than in the Girls' Brigade?



Likewise in the Boys' Brigade, we are firmly anchored, both *sure and stedfast* by our hope in God; and as such are part of something really big!

So, let us, as we go back to our Companies, remain *sure* of our purpose and calling, and *stedfast* in our commitment to that; knowing that we're not labouring in vain when we're working to advance the Kingdom; and remembering that Jesus is the builder – we're only the labourers. Therefore, let us earnestly *seek* Jesus in our planning; *serve* Him by our labours in our respective organisations; and *follow* His example in all that we aim to do in His name at a local, national, or UK & Eire level.

Lindsay Stein (Captain of the 1st Kirkliston Boys' Brigade)

WELCOME MINISTRY	
Sunday 6th December	Mr N Malcolm Mrs K Johnston
Sunday 13th December	Mr P Harris Mrs J Harris
Sunday 20th December	Mrs W Watters Mrs S Forshaw
Sunday 27th December	Mr A McDonald Mrs A McDonald
Sunday 3rd January	Mrs C Purser Mr W Jamieson
Sunday 10th January	Mrs A Mitchell Mr H Buchanan
Sunday 17th January	Mr J Irvine Mrs E Irvine
Sunday 24th January	Mrs B Morton Mrs J Badenoch
Sunday 31st January	Mr D Boyd Mrs M Boyd
Sunday 7th February	Mr N Malcolm Mrs K Johnston

WELCOME MINISTRY	
Sunday 14th February	Mr P Harris Mrs J Harris
Sunday 21st February	Mrs W Watters Mrs S Forshaw
Sunday 28th February	Mr A McDonald Mrs A McDonald
Sunday 6th March	Mrs C Purser Mr W Jamieson
Sunday 13th March	Mrs A Mitchell Mr H Buchanan
Sunday 20th March	Mr J Irvine Mrs E Irvine
Sunday 27th March	Mrs B Morton Mrs J Badenoch
Sunday 3rd April	Mr D Boyd Mrs M Boyd
Sunday 10th April	Mr N Malcolm Mrs K Johnston
Sunday 17th April	Mr P Harris Mrs J Harris

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Facebook : facebook.com/allanparksouth

Twitter : [@apschurch](https://twitter.com/apschurch)



www.allanparksouth.church



ALLAN PARK SOUTH CHURCH NEWSLETTER EXTRA

December 2015—January 2016

JUBILEE LUNCH CLUB

**For older people and families dealing
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JUBILEE LUNCH CLUB

Many thanks for all those who supported and helped out at the coffee morning to raise funds for the new lunch club. I also thank everyone for all the home baking received which made the morning a success. A special thanks to Kristen for all the work she put in to put together the old photos and memories.

The café is in response to the great need of the elderly within our Community who experience isolation and the growing number of cases of people experiencing dementia and their carers,

We are launching our new lunch club on 14th January 2016. This will initially run weekly on a Thursday from 12-2. Our aim would be to encourage elderly people to drop in to enjoy lunch and meet other people with their carers and enjoy some support. We have a high proportion of elderly in our Parish so we want to reach out to our most isolated elderly people. We will offer a nutritious meal of home made soup and sandwiches.

We are setting up a lunch club which will have an area set aside as a memories room. We hope to involve the Church Community and the local Community in collecting memorabilia to use in the project. There are many things that would be of interest to people. Old photos, clothes, toys, books, comics, records, medals, old stamps etc. Anything that might be of interest to chat about.

Part of the service is to offer a listening ear for all and spiritual care for those who wish it. We also hope to offer special events of craft, singing and other activities.

We have some interest in volunteering but can always accommodate more if anyone is interested in making soup or helping out with the serving or just to offer a listening ear.

Stirling Kirks Together Presents



Sunday 24th January 2016

3.30pm – 6.00pm

St Columba's Church Halls

Remember to bring an adult with you!

Programme:

3.30 – 4.00pm: Welcome

4.00 – 4.45pm: Messy Crafts/games

4.45 – 5.00pm: Celebration

5.00 – 6.00pm: Meal for everyone

Please hand in completed registration forms if possible

by 17th Jan at St Columba's Church office or The

McMichael Chapel, St Ninians Old Parish Church

Or Contact: Lyndsay Boyack 01786-832497

lyndsay.boyack@outlook.com

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JOHN 3:16

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

This is one of the best-known verses in the whole of the Bible, giving us a marvellous summary of the Gospel.

We see that God's love is for "the world" - men & women who, left to their own devices, ignore God and choose not to live by his standards. God has shown the amazing extent of his love through the sacrifice of his precious Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Through Christ's sacrifice, we can have forgiveness if we believe in him.

To believe in Jesus means to completely trust in Him and to commit our lives to him. Without faith in Jesus, we would perish and have to bear the punishment for our sins. But, for those who trust in Jesus, the wonderful alternative is granted - eternal life. We can know God and his love in this life and in eternity.

Through Christ, we see God's love shining like a light, giving us hope, even in the darkest times.

Ken Laing