

December 2020

Christmas Greetings

to Communicants and Friends of Tay and Lyon Churches

Blessings to you all this Christmas

Many of us are putting up our Christmas decorations early this year, probably because we all feel especially in need of a bit of warmth and cheer. We've certainly put up our tree already. Normally it stays in the garage for a couple of weeks to keep it fresh for as long as possible, before it loses its green and starts to drop needles. That won't matter this year because, for the first time, we've put up an artificial tree. It looks perfect – perhaps too perfect – and smells of plastic rather than pine; but it doesn't make any mess.

In a normal year, most of us usually put huge amounts of time and effort into trying to make Christmas perfect. This year, it can't be. It is perhaps a timely reminder that the first Christmas was decidedly messy, and smelly, and unsettling, and even frightening. But even so, it was, in its own way, perfect, because this was how God chose to enter our world, in all its messiness and imperfections. Only in this way can the message of Christmas speak to the real needs of people – not as a day of escape from reality, but in facing up to the challenges of living in an unjust, sometimes violent, disease-ridden world. The message is that hope, love, peace and joy will ultimately triumph, and that we can experience that now as a follower of Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord.

Rev Robert Nicol, Interim Moderator

Church Services

Sadly, we will not have services in our churches this December. Instead we are producing services for you to watch on-line:

13th Rev Robert Nicol, 3rd Sunday in Advent, from Kenmore

20th Rev Geoff Davis, 4th Sunday in Advent, from Logierait

25th Upper Tay Churches join in a service of lessons and carols

27th Rev Geoff Davis, from Tenandry

The Christmas service will be available to watch a few days before the 25th so you can choose when to watch. All services are accessible at <https://taylyonchurches.org.uk/worship-and-spiritual-life> on the Taylyon Churches website. Alternatively, go to YouTube and look for 'Churches Together – Upper Tay and Tenandry'.

On Sunday 3rd January, our service will be led by Rev Dr James Simpson.

Christmas Greetings to you all!

from Sandra, Outreach Co-ordinator

More musings and thoughts from my armchair...

Can I share with you an experience I'd have been chatting to you about over coffee after a service?

Like you, I have been affected by the constant uncertainty that has come to govern our lives. Only last week the time had come for me to attend an appointment at Ninewells Hospital for which I had waited 18 months. With the recent rise in Covid numbers I tossed about the questions 'Should I cancel? Should I go?' and agonised over this for a few days but decided to keep the appointment

along with considerable feelings of anxiety and nervousness.

How pleased I was that I had made that decision! The hospital staff were so organised, the arrangements in place to keep me safe were excellent, the time given to me was unrushed and full of care.

I reflected on how this virus has affected our self confidence — here I was... worried about a half-hour outpatient visit when all the hospital staff, doctors, nurses, receptionists and everybody else have to spend day after working day, in that environment— a real wake-up call for me!!

I tell this story just on the off chance there is someone else out there in a similar situation. Stop worrying and please just GO!

Many of us may be thinking this will be a Christmas like no other! One thing is for sure — it will certainly be different. We may not be able to meet up with our loved ones, families and friends or, if we do, then we'll feel awkward about not giving the usual hugs and kisses. I'm going to try and look beyond all this.

Christmas is the time when we celebrate the birth of Jesus, a helpless baby who became the light of the world. Christmas is about love, caring for others, looking after the vulnerable. Christmas is not cancelled this year....it's just different!

Let us strive to be a small light to brighten the darkness. Can I ask you to join me in lighting a candle on Christmas morning to join us all together, virtually?

I wish you a very happy and peaceful Christmas.

Sandra
01887 830 316

Remembering Helen Jackson OBE **28.07.1922 – 10.11.2020**

Rev Robert Nicol writes:

It says a great deal about Helen Jackson that, more than 40 years after her retirement, she is remembered with respect, gratitude and affection by so many of her former pupils. That much was evident by scrolling through the Facebook group page for "Willingsworth old skool" (a title Helen would surely not have approved) when her death was announced last month. Most comments were along the lines that she was "firm but fair". One comment read: "a proper old school headmistress; a lovely lady". It was also clear that she didn't stand for any nonsense. Two of her colleagues on the staff said those were the happiest days of their careers.

Helen was born and brought up in the Wirral. She followed her mother into teaching and her obvious ability led to early promotion to a deputy head post in Runcorn. For further advancement she moved to the West Midlands to become Head of a struggling all-girls' school, which she successfully turned around. When that was amalgamated with others to form one of the new, much larger Comprehensive schools in 1968, she was appointed Head. This was a considerable challenge, not least because the school was in an area of social and cultural deprivation. Her philosophy was that her pupils should be given the same opportunities to do well in life as any others. She widened the academic curriculum, and brought in a range of extra-curricular social and sporting activities. Her outstanding leadership and success was later recognised in her award of an OBE.

Many of you will know of Helen and her sister, Barbara, after they moved to Fearnan on retirement. They were active in the community, in the SWRI and the Guild. Helen played tennis and golf, and she continued to support her original local football team, Tranmere Rovers.

Helen was brought up in the Presbyterian Church and continued to be involved in church wherever she worked. When she moved here, she was admitted as an elder in Kenmore Church, and went on to serve two spells as Session Clerk. Her faith was life-long, and she said she was sustained by the presence of Christ in her life.

At the funeral service in Perth, we were fortunate to have a eulogy written by one of Helen's former



colleagues, Andrew Ritchie (this piece is based on his eulogy). Andrew has fond recollections of visiting Fearnan. He commented on Helen's driving ("a faith challenging experience") and on her love for the dogs. He said: "She loved the dogs and they always came first. When we stayed and were told we were going out for lunch to a very nice restaurant, that did not mean the food was good: no, it meant there was a shady spot to park the car for the Cairns." He added that the sisters spoiled the dogs by feeding them rich left-overs, resulting in one of them becoming solidly obese. When the vet told them they would kill the dog if they carried on like that, Helen's response was "What does he know about it?" Helen, Andrew said, was always forthright, even about subjects she knew nothing about!

Andrew's conclusion on Helen: "forceful, forthright, energetic, critical, encouraging, firm of purpose, tenacious, generous, lovable, loyal, committed, appreciative of her friends and the contribution of the local community, she will always have a place in our hearts." What a wonderful tribute to a special person, who made such a positive impact on the world throughout her 98 years.

Rev Anne Brennan remembers Helen:

When I first arrived as a very new minister, Helen had been Session Clerk for Kenmore and Lawers for several years, and was always very helpful and encouraging to me. She and her sister Barbara were involved in all aspects of church life, including the Guild. Underlying both their lives and personal faith, the church in all its variety was at the centre — from their parents' influence, through Sunday School, Youth Fellowship activities, membership, eldership and service as Clerk.

Helen had a great fund of stories about life in Hesselwell, her teacher-training during the war, a year spent in Australia, and her years as teacher, then Head Teacher. She had deliberately chosen to stay as headteacher of what were then *Secondary Modern* schools. She felt that she could really make a difference for children who enjoyed less of life's advantages.

She and Barbara were most hospitable - with many friends staying from 'down south', regular Fearnan get-togethers, sharing special birthday meals with friends and the memorable Pancake Day gatherings in aid of Guild funds.

Of course, there were the Westies, and the walks with them, latterly mostly along the Gallops. As the

sisters became frailer, they were supported by many good friends and neighbours which, along with deliveries from Strathtay and the Courtyard enabled them to stay in the home they loved. When, after Barbara's death, despite help from faithful friends, Helen realised it was time to make other arrangement. She settled contentedly into residence at the Falls of Dochart Home in Killin, where visiting friends were always welcome.

Blessings, Anne



Triubhas dubh a Fartair-chill, or Black Brecks from Fortingall — Fran Gillespie

Urisks, as I expect you know, are water spirits which inhabit deep, rocky mountain burns and sometimes lochs. They are generally friendly towards humans if treated with respect, if not then they can be troublesome. There was a time when almost every burn in Perthshire had its resident urisk, and Breadalbane was particularly noted for them. There was a famous urisk who lived under the bridge at Acharn, and another at Fearnan, and Fortingall had its own urisk who went by the name of Black Brecks. He lived in the burn known as Allt Odhar that runs in between the village and Glen Lyon House.

One autumn day the laird, who lived at Glen Lyon House [or Tullich mhullin as it was called in those days] wanted all his sheep that were up on the mountain rounded up and brought down, so he sent his shepherd up to fetch them. But the mist was so thick that the shepherd and his helpers failed to find many of the sheep and, after searching for many hours, they had to give up. So the laird turned to the urisk for help. The urisk and the laird had always got along pretty well so he was willing enough to lend a hand, and was off up the hill like a greyhound. In no time at all he had all those sheep gathered and penned into the fank. The laird was amazed at how short a time it had taken, and he asked the urisk if he'd had any trouble. 'No problem at all, master,' said the urisk, 'except for those two little grey devils there, they gave me more trouble than all the others put together.' The laird counted his sheep and every one of them was there — along with two mountain hares!

Lockdown: A Brief Pageant of English Verse

Anon

I won't arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
I'll sanitize the doorknob and make a cup of tea.
I won't go down to the sea again; I won't go out at all,
I'll wander lonely as a cloud from the kitchen to the hall.
There's a green-eyed yellow monster to the north of Katmandu
But I shan't be seeing him just yet and nor, I think, will you.
While the dawn comes up like thunder on the road to Mandalay
I'll make my bit of supper and eat it off a tray.
I shall not speed my bonnie boat across the sea to Skye
Or take the rolling English road from Birmingham to Rye.
About the woodland, just right now, I am not free to go
To see the Keep Out posters or the cherry hung with snow,
And no, I won't be travelling much, within the realms of gold,
Or get me to Milford Haven. All that's been put on hold.
Give me your hands, I shan't request, albeit we are friends
Nor come within a mile of you, until this trial ends.



Linda's Wee Quiz Answers from the October Newsletter

...no prizes, just a pat on the back if you get a good score!

No.	CLUE	ANSWER
1	The Sleeping Warrior lies here	Arran
2	George Orwell wrote <i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i> here	Jura
3	Does Spanish gold lie off the coast?	Mull
4	Kinloch Castle stands on this one	Rum
5	The site of <i>Calum's Road</i>	Raasay
6	SS Politician ran aground on this one	Calvay
7	The Winged Isle	Skye
8	Sir James Horlicks lived here	Gigha
9	John Lorne Campbell gifted it to the National Trust	Canna
10	Three lighthouse keepers disappeared here without trace	Flannan Isles
11	The cradle of Scottish Christianity	Iona
12	A runway on the beach	Barra
13	Lady Grange imprisoned here by her husband	St Kilda
14	The best curling stones	Ailsa Craig
15	Infected with Anthrax	Gruinard
16	Bonnie Prince Charlie's first foot on Scottish soil	Eriskay
17	Smallest of the Small Isles	Muck
18	Beloved of windsurfers	Tiree
19	Inspired Mendelssohn to write his <i>Hebrides overture</i>	Staffa
20	Island of distilleries	Islay