



### Rev Robert Nicol, Interim Moderator

Back in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Church Reformers in Scotland decided that the various religious festivals and holy days and saints' days through the year were a distraction and, too often, occasions for the wrong sort of celebration. They argued that all days are of equal value, and that every Sunday we should remember the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They even persuaded Parliament to legally abolish Christmas. Some of us will remember when Christmas was a working day, or at least half-day. This is, at least in part, why Hogmanay became such a major, alternative, festival in Scotland.

Gradually though, Christmas and Easter crept back in, along with a recognition in the church that it does no harm, and actually does us a lot of good, to focus on certain aspects of the faith at particular times of the year. Now there is no effective difference between the way Christmas is observed in Scotland and England. Within the church, the season of Advent has also made a come-back.

Advent recognises that the Incarnation – when God himself entered the world as a human baby – is too big an event to be celebrated on only one day in the year. The four

Sundays of Advent, leading up to Christmas, help us to think about what it all means. There are different traditions associated with each of the Sundays, but a common pattern is firstly to look at some of the Old Testament promises of God, that he would intervene in the world when the time was right, bringing light into the darkness; secondly, to study the prophets who foretold the coming of the Messiah and described his character and actions; thirdly, to read about John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Christ's appearance; and fourthly, to think of Mary, the girl chosen by God to mother the Saviour of the World – the girl who dared to say "yes".

This year, it is going to be wonderful to have in-person services again, when we can meet together and sing the familiar hymns and carols. There are still restrictions on capacity, and there are still rules on cleaning between services, which mean that we can't hold as many services as usual over the Christmas period. But I do hope you will be able to get to church at some point and join with us in celebrating the best news the World has ever heard.

*Advent and Christmas blessings to you all!*

## CHURCH SERVICES

Unfortunately there has been no change in the rules governing our church services. The church session had hoped for a relaxation in the restrictions under which we currently live, allowing for more services over the Christmas period. That has not happened. Given the cleaning arrangements required between services this means fewer services will be allowed than in normal times...but... certainly more than we had last year!

Sadly, the restriction on numbers within the church

at Innerwick means that there cannot be a carol service in Glenlyon this year. Instead, there will be a carol service at Fortingall Church at 5pm on Christmas Eve which replaces the Watchnight Service usually held at Fortingall.

**Please note... Covid restrictions mean that it is NOT possible to have a Christmas Day service followed by a Sunday service on the 26th at either Fortingall or Kenmore churches.** After discussion it was decided not to have a Christmas Day service but hold the Sunday service on the 26th at Kenmore Church.

## SUMMARY OF DECEMBER SERVICES

| Day                     | Date             | Time | Where      | Service Detail        |
|-------------------------|------------------|------|------------|-----------------------|
| Sunday                  | 5 <sup>th</sup>  | 11am | Fortingall | Gift Service          |
| Sunday                  | 12 <sup>th</sup> | 11am | Kenmore    | Service               |
| Sunday                  | 19 <sup>th</sup> | 11am | Fortingall | Nine Lessons & Carols |
| Friday: Christmas Eve   | 24 <sup>th</sup> | 5pm  | Fortingall | Carol Service         |
| Saturday: Christmas Day | 25 <sup>th</sup> | -    | -          | <b>NO SERVICES</b>    |
| Sunday: Boxing Day      | 26 <sup>th</sup> | 11am | Kenmore    | Service               |

## Some Musings from Sandra, your Outreach Elder

How wonderful to go back to church on Sundays and worship all together once again. Oh how we have all missed this lovely experience!

Slowly we are working our way back to a fulfilling form of worship already delighting in a heart-warming **Harvest Thanksgiving Service** in a beautifully decorated church (see separate page). Later in October we enjoyed a congregational afternoon tea celebrating Nettie's and Nan's long years of service to our church. A year ago we wondered if events would ever happen again!

Whiling away pleasant hours working in the greenhouse I was treated to a rendering of the Country and Western chart topper, **One Day at a Time!** It occurred to me that the lyrics are in the form of a prayer with the singer asking for the strength to face the challenges of life. The song suggests not worrying about tomorrow, for tomorrow will take care of itself!

The ancient Chinese Philosopher, Lao Tzu is credited with some wise sayings. What do you think of this as a positive way of living in the present?

***If you are depressed, you are living in the past,  
If you are anxious, you are living in the future,  
If you are at peace, you are living in the present.***

I'm not making any profound statements but offer these words as a possible way to ground ourselves positively in the present. My grandmother was renowned in our family for her philosophy of seeing each new day as a gift and your duty to make the most of it. Life is too short to worry about what happened yesterday or what might happen tomorrow. Let us try to let go of what we cannot alter and choose to be present in the moment....One day at a time!! I hope this finds you well. Take care.

*My very best wishes, Sandra (01887 830 316)*

## NAN AND NETTIE'S RETIRAL PRESENTATION: MOLTENO HALL, FORTINGALL

Congregations from Taylyon Churches celebrated Nan Dickson's and Nettie Lacey's years of dedicated service to our churches with special presentations and afternoon tea on 27 October 2021. Here are edited versions of the tributes from Alex Towns and Gordon Stark to Nan's and Nettie's long years of service.

### Nan Dickson

Towards the end of 1968, Mr McCarthur, treasurer of Fortingall Church, asked the Kirk Session's permission to stand down from his post because of ill-health. Surprisingly, applicants to fill this vacancy were not forthcoming. However, the minister at the time, Paton Henderson, approached a young lady of the congregation, Nan Dickson, and asked if she might assist. Nan agreed to take on the duties of treasurer for Fortingall Church, in a temporary capacity, until someone else could be found. Thus, in January 1969, Nan became the "temporary" treasurer at Fortingall.

Since then, Nan has sat in her pew at the front of Fortingall Kirk during Sunday services listening to sermons from no less than ten ministers: Anne Brennan, Paton Henderson and Messers McPhee, Burnside, Bruce, Bowie, McVicar, McBride, Mann and Nicol, and so many other supply ministers and several lay readers.

Nan has always remained quiet, dignified and always refrained from commenting on their sermon content and style of preaching and has never, as far as I know, held up a card giving marks out of 10.

Indeed, I think quiet, dignified and faithful are qualities Nan has displayed over the past 52 years as treasurer. She has seldom been absent from church on a Sunday and has always attended Session Meetings - many of which were held in the vestry at Fortingall on cold winter evenings with nothing more than the one bar electric heater for comfort.

It is in no small measure that our thanks go to Nan, for overseeing the finances of the Kirk, keeping the books in good order and ensuring we never went into the red. The last 52 years probably mark the longest "temporary post" in the history of the Church of Scotland. Well done, faithful servant!

*Alex Towns, Session Clerk*

### Nettie Lacey

In 1982, Rev. Adam Bowie, the local minister invited Nettie to take over as organist and, for almost 40 years, she served faithfully in Fortingall, Glenlyon and Kenmore churches. Nettie was not only a capable organist who loved music but proved to be a true friend of the congregation and a local worthy. Although Nettie has now retired as organist we shall retain a number of memorable images of her over the years.

Firstly, Nettie engaged in one of the little verbal exchanges with Anne Brennan which occasionally punctuated morning services - usually about the suitability of a particular hymn tune. These exchanges were more striking in Kenmore kirk where Nettie's disembodied voice came down from on high like some divine intervention, but the congregation soon became accustomed to them; visitors were intrigued by them.

In another vignette we see Nettie with our senior elder, Dr Michael Riddell, who, even in his 90s insisted on putting up the hymn numbers before the service and clambering up to reach the hymn board. A little shaky, Michael had to stand on a chair, with Nettie's hymn list in one hand and a few hymn numbers in the other. Beneath him, Nettie stood with an anxious expression and arms tentatively outstretched to catch him if he fell. A fall would have been serious for them both but never happened as a guardian angel watched over them. Risk Assessment might have been appropriate but there was no tick box for guardian angel!

We are very grateful to Nettie, not only for her valuable contribution, as organist, to our worship for so many years but also for what she has meant to us as a person. We will always remember her with gratitude and affection.

*Gordon Stark, Former Session Clerk*

