

THE BULLETIN

THE MAGAZINE OF
CORSTORPHINE CRAIGSBANK
PARISH CHURCH

Where **Life** is celebrated, **Love** is affirmed, and **Grief** and **Joy** are shared



May you find a little peace this Christmas

Craigsbank Church Centre
East Craigs Church Centre
www.craigsbankchurch.org.uk

**Christmas
2021**



A NOTE IN THE TIMES OF A **PANDEMIC**

Covid is something we are all learning to live with – with the help of vaccines, boosters, masks and awareness. As this bulletin is printing, news is breaking of a new variant which will once again challenge us locally and be a cause of concern across the world. However, at present our Church centres are open once again for in-person worship on a Sunday morning, and details of services are given below. We will still ask you to wear a mask and to give your contact details but... it is good to be back!

And as the days of December roll in, we wish you a Happy, Healthy and Peaceful Christmas.

Christmas 2021 services:

- 19 Dec Nativity Play 10.30am, Craigsbank Hall**
- 24 Dec Carols & Christingle 6.00pm, Craigsbank Sanctuary**
- 24 Dec Watchnight 11.30pm St Andrews Clermiston Church**
- 25 Dec Christmas 10.30am Craigsbank Hall**
- 26 Dec Worship Service 10.30am East Craigs Sanctuary**





MINISTER'S LETTER

Rock, paper, scissors...
the thing, the description,
the reality

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'

So echoes the opening line of the wonderful Gospel according to John. The very first verses of John harmonise with the opening lines of the Hebrew holy scriptures we know as Genesis 1: 'In the beginning God...?'


In both these texts, in both these cultures, the Hebrew and the Greek cultures, we read and hear of the power of God in and through *words*. In John's writing God is equated to the original, all-encompassing *Word* (Logos) which makes all of reality possible, whilst in the Hebrew text God creates reality mostly through *speaking* (or calling) it into existence.

Taking a look at us as humanity, it goes without saying that through the ages we have developed as individuals and as society, through the means of *communication*. Through the understanding and sharing and use of communication. Linguists are increasingly pointing out how our perception is described and prescribed by the very vocabulary, language and descriptors we use. In other words, not only is seeing believing, but verbalising is seeing. And if this is the case, then verbalising enhances/limits what we see (perceive) which in turn enhances/limits what we believe.

Which brings me to the value of stories. Preferably good stories. Stories that enable the listener/reader to become part of the story in a way that grasps hold of the heart and soul of the listener/reader.

I remember how courageous I felt as I floated on their raft down the river with Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer. How I had a sense of belonging as a part of Robin Hood's merry band of roguish do-gooders. Reading the struggles of Saul Barnard, in the now classic South African *Circles in a Forest*, helped me to better discern right from might. Watching the inspirational movie *Dead Poets Society*, I owned up to my license to be creative.





On the days I am up for less commonplace stories written in more dated language, the deeper soul-searching challenges of classics like Shakespeare's plays or Tolstoy's works often open my eyes and soul to deeper understanding of the various human conditions and societal intricacies. So the words I read that made up the stories I consumed helped build my understanding of myself and of others, and of the world in which I understood us all to exist. The words empower and establish the reality I perceive. Put in a Biblical phrase from the Apostle Paul, who said: 'How can you believe if you have not heard the message first?'

Well, God bless Scotland for the rich history of authors and storytellers, of songwriters and word-artists, publishers, playwrights and, yes, even literary critics. How enriched the English-speaking world is for all the works that have been and still are flowing forth from the pens of Scottish storytellers. Stories that create realities which in turn build the world we live in.

As we as a congregation gather around pine trees, nativity sets and Christmas dinners, we follow in an age-old tradition of listening to an inspirational story. A story of hope and liberation, of the holy coming forth from the mundane, of good not being defeated by evil, of destinations and destinies, of yearnings met and longings prolonged.

May the story of the Word becoming flesh find our ears and hearts open as we enter into the alleys of Bethlehem, and exit into the streets of Edinburgh with our hearts inspired and minds enlarged.

Rev Alan Childs



MARY'S SONG

A prayer for refugee and homeless mothers this Christmas



Gabriel, mighty herald
of heaven's realm
Swept down to earth,
Scattering the mundane
expectations of my life,
Turned me to face a prospect of
such significance
As to make me gasp at its implications.
That you should choose me.
Young, naïve and poor
To bear your precious son.

O seed of mystery and life,
How will it be
For you – for me?
It makes me wonder...

I feel the stirrings in my womb,
A moth's wing flutter.
The intimacy of your life
In mine.
O great God of heaven,
Within,
Seed of mystery divine
Taking on flesh
In this meagre human frame.
How can so little encompass so much?
As my body ripens
My heart swells
With love and care.
How will it be
For you – for me?
It makes me wonder...

But,
I never thought it would be like this!

Wrenched from home at Herod's whim,
To this foreign place.
Long hours of weary travel
Jostled and jolted,
Sore, tired and worried,
Will we make it in time?
Numbed by people's indifference,
Desperation now,
A damp and dirty outhouse
Affords us shelter
Amidst the soft stirrings
And murmurings of the beasts,
A solitary comfort
In a cold and hostile world.
Knowing my time has come
We scabble in the darkness,
Anxiously
To prepare a place for the birth.
And how my heart yearns
For the comfort of family and home.
Deep within the agony.
I did not plan it this way,
To bring God's son to birth
In such a filthy place.

But I have no time to wonder –
How it will be
For you – for me,
For suddenly –
I never thought it would be like this...

Searing, cloying, gripping spasms
Of a new life struggling to be free.

There is no turning back
And I give my whole self to you
In pain,
In squalor,
In indignity,
And fear.
I empty myself to give you life
Little Lord.

But as I reach to hold you,
Enfolding you to my breast,
And brush your tiny head
With tender, soft, caresses,

And explore your perfect body
With my searching eyes and fingers,
My heart soars in adoration.
I feel the surge of milk
Laced with anguish and tears.

I know a love which
Banishes the darkness
And the fears.
Enclosed in your purpose and your will,
I feel safe
For you little Lord,
And for me.
And I wonder,
How will it be?

Esther Davidson

MARY'S SONG OF **SORROW**

O dear, sweet Lord.
Beloved first son,
How could it come to this?
I cannot bear to look,
To see your gentle hands so
cruelly pierced,
And face, so comely,
Streaked with sweat and tears.
The rasping sound of each
strained breath
Clutches at my heart
Till it would break.

Dear child,
Heart of my heart,
How I long to hold you to my breast
And cradle your aching
head in my arms.
To feel the touch of your gentle hands,
And your hearty, strong embrace.
To run my fingers through
your matted hair
And ease the thorns from battered brow,
To tenderly enfold your bruised body,
And bring you rest.



To take away your pain
And hold you to me now.
God grant you peace my son,
From this world's vain contempt
Be free.

Fill him with your love as his life ebbs away.
Be there for him as I can no longer be.
Take my love and with it dab his brow,
And moisten lips that only love did show,
And raise him up to take each breath that
 he might know,
That in his dying we are there.

Father hold him fast
Till we must let him go at last.
Esther Davidson

A HUG IN A MUG

Our recent events

We held a Soup and Sandwich lunch at East Craigs on Saturday 23 October and this was attended by forty-two people. The following Saturday, we held a Cream Tea at Craigsbank where fifty-two attended.

The reason we held these events was two fold:

- Firstly, as a social gathering to give members of the congregation, and their friends, the opportunity to meet up, catch up and eat up!!! This seemed to work out very well. Both events were well attended and there was lots of noise of chattering and laughing as we all got together, many for the first time this year.
- Secondly, to help raise funds to help our Church recover from the pandemic and grow stronger. The Church of Scotland supported events like these by announcing National Giving Day, which meant that during the month of October 100% of the income raised could be kept by local churches. Normally 60% of our income is transferred to Church of Scotland to help fund their good works both locally, nationally and internationally. So a big THANK YOU to our leaders at '121'.





The total raised at both events was an excellent £1,277.92. So many thanks to all those who helped out by preparing food, setting up, serving and cleaning up. Of course we also need to thank all those who attended and who gave so generously. There were lots of positive comments about the events, many asking when the next one would take place!

As part of National Giving Day members were encouraged to make special contributions to our Church. This money, when added to the monies raised at the social events, gave a final total of £3,556.31. A huge thank you to all who gave so generously. Under normal circumstances we would have to have raised nearly £9,000 to match this total.

Ann and Mike Brough

ART FOR THE PLANET

East Craigs and Craigsbank Church ECO Group

Some of you may have seen the banner hanging from the iconic pillars of New College on the Mound in November. The banner was to announce the commencement of COP26 in Glasgow, with its focus on Climate Change, Environmental Sustainability and Justice throughout the world. We, the East Craigs and Craigsbank ECO Group were invited to take part in the project, entitled Art for the Planet, and commissioned by the University of Edinburgh School of Divinity.

The theme was to be 'green', to speak of the natural world, God's gift of Creation and was to be big and bold. We gathered together all our pieces of leftover materials and recyclable bits and pieces. To our delight we had some beautiful pieces of greens and blue which leant themselves perfectly to the creation of a tree. We designed, in pieces of wallpaper, a Scots Pine which we then put together into the image of a pine



tree. Some of the material leant itself perfectly to the light and shade on the fronds of the pine. The pine grew up out of the rocks as it would do in its mountain environment. Finally, using silver fly tying thread which had been around for perhaps 50 years, we embroidered the name of our Church on the lower leaves.

We very much enjoyed the experience it being one of the 'Sewing Bee' – working and chatting together convivially. During the process sewing machines were hauled out of cupboards which hadn't been used for many a year, not all standing up to the strain!

We hope that you enjoyed our contribution to the whole, and that it spoke to all who saw it of the value of Creation, its importance, beauty and diversity and pray that we will restore a rightful relationship with all living things.

Esther Davidson, Liz Brash, Anne Currie, Julie Wilkinson
East Craigs and Craigsbank ECO Group



FOOD RECYCLING WITH THE ECO GROUP

In February of this year, aware of food waste in supermarkets, the ECO Group did a survey of local supermarkets to ask how they disposed of food which had reached its sell by date, as we had an outlet for food they were willing to donate. The Co-op at East Craigs was delighted to donate surplus food. Originally, we delivered the food to The Hub in Corstorphine and then the Trussell Trust, at Lairdship Yards. However, The Hub closed and the Trussell Trust changed their way of operating and advised us about The One Stop Shop at Broomhouse.

At first we made one collection a week from The Co-op but in the last two months this has increased to two collections. We have five teams of



two, who collect surplus food each week on a Tuesday and Thursday evening from the Co-op at East Craigs. The next morning we deliver it to the One Stop Shop at Broomhouse Market, where it is gratefully received. This prevents the Co-op having food waste and benefits the community. Recently, we have rescued a large box of bananas, two bags of carrots and a bag of onions as well as regularly being given other fruit and vegetables, bread, rolls, eggs and cakes which are at their sell by date, often amounting to four large bags. This a very satisfying project as it ticks many boxes – food is not wasted, people benefit, the shop helps the community and we help save the planet through recycling. The ECO Group is grateful to all who make this project possible and would like to expand it if the resources become available.

Anne Currie, Esther Davidson, Julie Wilkinson, Liz Brash and helpers

MUSIC MATTERS!



I'm delighted to be able to report in this bulletin that the Craigsbank Singers have now resumed face-to-face. After 18 months of virtual singing the group returned to in house meetings at the start of November. The singers are currently meeting on Thursday evenings in the sanctuary at Craigsbank from 7.00pm and new members are always welcome. The ability to read music is not necessary, so please don't let that put you off coming along.

We also have a music club for children operating on a Thursday evening at 5.30pm in Craigsbank and this is open to any pre-school and primary aged children who enjoy singing. This group started in late September and the numbers have steadily increased each week.

At the time of writing, both groups are busy preparing for upcoming festive projects. The adult singers have been invited to participate in a Christmas concert with the Bohemians Musical Theatre Company to be held at Craigsbank on Thursday 9th December and the Children are working on a short Christmas musical, which we hope they will perform for us during our own Christmas celebrations.

Christmas is of course a busy time for everyone and an important time in our Church life. This time last year it felt very strange celebrating Christmas virtually, so I think it's fair to say that we're all very much looking forward to singing our carols and Christmas songs together this year.

Beyond the busy Christmas period and through the darker winter months, we are intending to open the church at Craigsbank for quiet prayer and reflection by candlelight where I'll be playing a selection of quiet music on the piano and organ. Anybody wishing to come along and enjoy some time out will be most welcome. I'll be in the sanctuary at Craigsbank from 7pm – 8pm on the follow dates:

- **Wednesday 22nd December 2021**
- **Wednesday 19th January 2022**
- **Wednesday 23rd February 2022**

As ever, I'm deeply grateful to all the wonderful people that help with and contribute so widely to the music at Craigsbank. Thank you to each and every one of you.

I hope you all have a wonderful Christmas and best wishes for 2022.

John Patterson

bloc
THE BOHEMIANS

present...

CRIMBOH

A concert of carols, songs and sketches
guaranteed to get you in the festive spirit!

Edinburgh
8th Dec 7.30pm
The Old Dr Bells Baths, Leith

9th Dec 7.30pm
Craigsbank Church, Corstorphine

Perth
12th Dec 3pm
St. Matthew's Church

Tickets: £7/Under 16's £4
To book tickets email:
business@bohemians.org.uk

Covid measures will be in place.

We are proud to be supporting **rock trust**

JUNIOR MUSIC MAKERS

Every Thursday, during the school term, from 5:30-6:30pm you can find John, Scott and myself in amongst our Junior Music Maker participants in the Craigsbank Sanctuary. We've been getting to know one another, learning everyone's name and working out what we all enjoy about music.

It turns out that everyone loves The Pink Panther by Henry Mancini and the mums in particular are enjoying reminiscing to Reach by SClub7!

Each week we have a mixture of rhythm activities using instruments and/or body percussion (making rhythms by clapping, stamping clicking or tapping different parts of the body), singing, movement to music and trying out the different percussion instruments we have. Our youngest member is 3 years old and our eldest is 10 (not including the leaders or mum and gran helpers) but the majority are around 8 years old.



John and I were so impressed by the number, enthusiasm and talent of those who joined the group we've decided to stage a nativity together and you're all invited. We chatted to Alan and decided that the last Sunday in Advent (19th December) would be the best time to do this. We have roped in Esther Davidson to oversee the costumes and props and Emma Wilson (sister of Paul Christie and one of our mums) to help with choreography. Alison Craig (nee Russell) and Jenny Ridland (nee Allen) are also being put to good use while they accompany their children to the club. You definitely can't accuse us of allowing talent to go unused!

The version of the nativity story that we have chosen is called The Big Little Nativity. It has all the main recognisable characters of the story and, along with the narrators, they take us through the journeys of Mary and Joseph, the wise travellers, the shepherds and their associated animals using both speech and song. We have a few people doubling or even tripling their roles so you may well recognise a sheep that was formerly a camel or a star that might be an angel when you next spot her but we hope this will add to your enjoyment and keep you guessing about who will appear again next!

The children are all working really hard to learn their lines, movement and songs and we'd all love you to come along and support them during the morning service at Craigsbank on the Sunday before Christmas. See you there!

Ros Morrison 2021

ONE STORY **CAN** CHANGE OUR WORLD

The following is taken from the introduction to a book that I've been working on recently, **Blood and Gold: A Journey into Shadows** by Edinburgh writer, Mara Menzies. Mara is of mixed Kenyan and Scottish heritage and is an outstanding performance storyteller, renowned in countries right across the world. But home is very much Scotland.

A young black man once travelled to Edinburgh for a meeting and sat down at a café on the Royal Mile. The waiter pulled out his seat and called him 'sir'. He was struck by how equal he felt, as he had never encountered such hospitality before.

Another young black man found himself in the Grassmarket, a beautiful, enjoyable part of the city. He had the audacity to speak to a white woman, an act for which he was stabbed to death and, despite the many eyewitnesses and the known identities of the killers, nobody was ever brought to justice.

The first story took place in 1846 – 175 years ago. The young man was Sir Frederick Douglass. He had escaped slavery in the Americas and became one of the foremost anti-slavery campaigners of his time. The second story took place in 1989, not too long ago. The young man was Axmed Sheekh, a promising young student from Somalia.

It's surprising how little we have moved forward. It is not surprising how little we talk about it because it is uncomfortable to believe that Scots were the majority shareholders in the plantations. It is unsettling to think that many Scottish families benefitted from millions of pounds in compensation from the British government for the 'loss' of their human property. It is an unpalatable truth that 70 per cent of the Jamaican phonebook is made up of Scottish names. It is easier to shy away from the fact that portraying people as sub-human was essential for the success of the colonies and the slave trade, and how in many ways that narrative is perpetuated to this day.

Who would want to speak about things like that? But the thing is we need to. Because if we don't talk about it, acknowledge it and learn from it, then the increasing hate crimes, intolerance and racism that we see everywhere will seep further into our society, and a society filled with fear and hate is a lost society. I love our country and imagine a better future for us.

Blood and Gold is a book that will inspire you, exhaust you, move you, uplift you and fill you with hope for Scotland's future. It is a generous book that offers breathing room to a difficult subject and approaches it with a freshness that will surprise. The future belongs to brave writers and thinkers. Mara Menzies is one of those.

Jan Rutherford

PLANTING FOR SPRING



In November, two large bags of daffodil bulbs were donated to the ECO Group for planting near our apple trees at the two Parks and other identified areas in between.

The members of the ECO Group, staff from the Council and volunteers undertook planting and tidying the areas on 17th November and a share of the bulbs was given to East Craigs Primary School too.

We are deeply indebted to our Council both through Councillor Mark Brown and also the professional staff of the two Departments who came out to help with the planting.

Now we look forward to the Spring display which will hopefully be the result of our efforts, for all to enjoy.

Anne Currie



A few weeks ago Esther wrote a Westoverland article about the boots worn-out by 'Stephen' as he took part in the

relay walk from Cornwall to Glasgow to mark the start of COP26. Here are some photographs of the group who took part along with artwork by children at East Craigs Primary School. Stephen's boots inspired the congregation to plant trees in old boots at East Craigs Centre.



IN EDINBURGH NOW

In Edinburgh, now, the quiet autumn
Goes about its business, stripping trees,
Persuading the last of the summer's foliage
To submit to the inevitable; as we, too,
Need a nudge to accept that summer,
Our time of shirtsleeves and

occasional warmth,
Is over now, reluctantly packed away
Until the next tilt of our world
Makes the north a touch more like
The south it perpetually wishes to be.

The philosophical, the stoical,
those who accept
The place they happen to be in,
Look to autumn as a time of fulfilment,
Rarely complain at the draining of days
And the more frequent occurrence
of winds,
Look up at the sky with eyes
Open to finding those qualities
That make autumn, and winter, appealing;
Most of us, I suspect, would care to spend
More time with those non-complainers
Than with those who regret summers:
To be happy with what's coming
is as important
As to be happy with what's gone before,

Now comes the time of thoughtful silence;
We read a book, think, perhaps,
Of people to write to, or we reflect,
If we are no correspondents, on the reason
Why we write so few letters today;
We are so busy, most of us,
Consigning brief messages to an
uncertain ether,

Ephemeral words, for the most part,
About this or that, nothing important,
That are light upon a screen,
Seen briefly, then swept away,
Like the leaves that litter our pavements,
Here in this leafy corner of the city.

Not far from where I am
The Union Canal winds its way
Towards a patient aqueduct
And the short distances of West Lothian;
Lovers still walk, hand in hand,
Past exuberant dogs and runners;
A city, for all its busyness, for
all its urgency,
And size, still offers the possibilities
Of friendship, maybe more,
Because it is always quite likely
It will have somebody just right for us,
For all our faults and inadequacies.

So, in. autumn, we wish for those
we know,
Just that – friendship, and the
things of friendship,
May a thoughtful day confer on them
The generosity that the end of the year
Still has energy to bring to the least of us,
Here in Edinburgh, in this city by a
cold sea,
Under the gaze of these hills, this
particular sky.

Alexander McCall Smith



CHURCH INFORMATION

Your District Elder or District Visitor

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Email: _____

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Email: achilds@churchofscotland.org.uk

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For more information about the church
visit our website

www.craigsbankchurch.org.uk

Thanks for all the contributions for this
issue. Please continue to send in photos or
items at any time.

Craigsbank is a parish of the Church of Scotland
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