



Chalmers Memorial Church Newsletter Christmas 2020



May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans Ch15 v13

Dear friends,

The Manse, November 2020

I took a little glance back at what I wrote last year at this time in our Newsletter and discovered that I asked if you were feeling “*Christmassy!*”, whatever we mean when we say that!

Of course, this time last year things were indeed very different from how they are this year. None of us, after all, had even an inkling of how quickly the events of this year would overtake and how quickly the Government had to act to try and control what has turned out to be a global pandemic that has brought with it an abundance of pain and heartache.

At every level of our lives, things have been different. It's affected our ability to work in our usual ways, the way children are taught at school, our ability to see our family and friends as we would have liked and even the way we shop.

We have done our best, if we can, to do what we can online. It has been a boom year for online trading but a disastrous one for many shops and businesses that rely on getting folk through their doors.

It became apparent early on that, if we were to keep Chalmers Church moving along, that we too were going to have to do more online. So, we put our prayer meeting onto Zoom, and our Kirk Session too and not forgetting our coffee chats! Our Facebook page has become an increasingly useful way of communicating too.

We have also learnt to adapt our worship – using podcasts and written scripts at first and now using a combination of written scripts, podcasts and “live” services (albeit in our Church hall rather than the sanctuary).

I want to thank you all – as sincerely as I can – for the flexibility and understanding that you've show during these months and the way that you have allowed us to adapt to a new pattern of being. Things are looking up a bit now with the prospect of a vaccine on the horizon. We are, however, going to need to hold things as they are for a while yet until regulations change.

So back to the question – “*Are you feeling Christmassy?*”

Well, maybe the answer to that question will not be the same for any us this year, at least not if we define Christmas by the tinsel and the trappings of a traditional Christmas. But the message of Christmas remains the same regardless.

God still did amazing things that we thank and praise him for. He still sent Jesus Christ into our midst - and he still does. There were some who went seeking for that Christ child just as there are many who seek him still. Peace came amongst - and it still does in the stillness and silence of this season and of God's presence.

Different – yes. This year will be different. But still, in a strange way, the same. Continuity amongst discontinuity. Peace and reassurance when we need it the most.

May God bless you and yours at this Holy Season as we hope and pray for better days to come.

Your friend and Minister,
Robin Allison (Rev)

**Our Minister - Rev Robin N Allison
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Children and Youth News

As Robin has mentioned in his letter from last year, we also think back to Christmas 2019, when our **Youth Kirk** were preparing for **The Wee Sleep Out**. They loved it and raised **£1,000** for Social bite (£1,250 with Gift Aid). The activity opened their eyes to the life of being homeless (please see the February 2020 edition for the full report).

We were only able to meet in January and February this year before the pandemic hit. We have kept in touch with our children and young people via regular activities on our Facebook page and with some practical activities.

In the early part of lockdown, we decided it would be nice to engage with our **Kids Kirk** and **Youth Kirk** boys and girls. We gave them all a small gift activity - a rainbow keyring. This went down well and was a nice way to keep in touch with our families.



We have missed an Easter and summer holiday club and our Christmas club is also not going ahead so we are sending out gift bags to all our children. We don't want to spoil the surprise for them.... in the bag each child has a gift and tree decorations. They also have an activity pack with resources to use with their families and a Christmas storybook. Hopefully over December you will spot these in windows around the village. As a thank you to our team, they have a gift bag too, so we expect to see your artwork! We felt this was a way of engaging with our families and sharing the Christmas story.

Once we have been given the all clear from the Scottish Government and Church of Scotland, we will be back.... Watch this space.

God Bless, Sheila, Amanda & Irene - KidsKirk@chalmerschurch.co.uk or text on 07980 059 974.

Churches Together

The group have met over the last few months via zoom. We have produced a Christmas card to be delivered to every home in the village, with thanks to our distributors. This year's is somewhat different as we are not able to have the programme of services as we have done in the past. However, we are as a group of churches keen to bring a Christmas message to our community.

We are now beginning to think about our programme for 2021; we pray that we may eventually get back to something approaching normal and hold some joint services.

George Smith

Chalmers Crafters

A big Thank You to the knitters and crocheters who have made hundreds of Angels and Stars.

These will be distributed to the congregation, Kids and Youth Kirk members and included with greetings to the school staff. You may also come across some around the village.



Elizabeth Glover

Fabric Update

Most of the issues highlighted by the Fabric Committee in 2018 have now been completed and our buildings and gardens are now in much better condition. The new doors at the Osborne Terrace entrance have made a big difference. The rotten windowsills have been replaced and painted. However, the contractors advise that the window frames are in poor condition and need to be replaced soon. Our next big project, perhaps. No doubt we will have to go through the torturous Planning process again!

The gardeners requested an external water supply, and a tap has now been installed to help them keep the gardens in good condition. The church gardens have been well tended over the past months and a visitor recently complimented us on how well they were looking. The trees and bushes in the south facing garden have been cut back for safety reasons and several bushes and trees in the manse garden have also been pruned back.

Before we were able to start services, much effort had gone into ensuring the hall met the Scottish Government regulations. Our pattern of twice weekly services is working well but as yet we have not been able to worship in the Church which is mainly due to logistical issues. To meet the regulations the hall is being professionally cleaned twice a week and if we were to use the Church, capacity would be slightly less than the hall with higher cleaning costs.

The Fabric Committee will prepare a schedule of work for next the two years as soon as it can but in the meantime some electrical work is overdue, including having all plugs and the lightning conductor checked. These will be attended to as soon as possible.

John Murdoch, Fabric Convenor

Church Finance

Once again, we want to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for your continuing generosity towards the work of God in this place, during these times in which we live. We appreciate the fact that a good number have switched over to standing orders which avoids the need to handle cash. However, we know that this is not convenient for some folk, and we are grateful for the cash and cheques which come in on a regular basis.

Along with this newsletter will be freewill offering envelopes for those who contribute in this manner. Should you wish to join this scheme, please contact Eleanor Willins (812616), or John Murdoch (812469) should you wish to donate by standing order. There is also the ability to donate through the link on the church website.

Whilst our Income has been encouraging, our Expenditure has been slightly higher. This has been due mainly to costs incurred to improve the fabric of our church buildings, as John has detailed elsewhere, but there are funds available to cover this.

We continue to thank God for His goodness towards us in providing for our needs day by day, and we are grateful for the support and encouragement that you give towards the fellowship of our church family. But not only that. As I write this, we have collected £1,100 for the local Pennypit Trust at our retiring offerings, with more to come in. This will be used to provide help for local families this Christmas who need support. On their behalf, a warm thanks to those who have contributed to this outward show of caring this Christmas. Any further contributions from those unable to attend services will be passed on if given to your elder or the treasurer.

Ian Bulloch, Treasurer

SESSION SECTION

What a year we have had. The last we shared with you was about the setting up of new ways of communicating with members of our church family – at all levels. We have come together in various ways, and while some meet people now and again accidentally on a daily walk, others become slowly familiar with ever-more-common ZOOM meetings online.

Like the small team from the Session, given responsibility to keep up to date with government regulations and to meet – via ZOOM – to provide reports of relevant detail and options of ways forward to the Kirk Session to guide discussion. The Session have also met online - 6 times since March – to continue ongoing work, but particularly in order to make those decisions necessary to open the church for services, following government Covid guidelines, working out how to put them in place and communicate them to you.

- None of us wished to be stuck in our homes – but we have found new ways to minimise isolation.
- None of us wished to be unable to visit – but we have found alternative ways of keeping in touch.
- None of us wished to be unable to come to church – but we have made possible worshipping in the Hall.

Some of our work remains in abeyance, with aims and agendas of different Committees and Groups unable to move forward. Other Committees – and individuals - have worked solidly to keep the Church strong in faith, strong financially and strong physically.

At this year end, we thank particularly our Minister for his ministry to us, our Treasurer for his financial acumen and our Fabric Convenor for his organisational skills in getting jobs done. Thanks to the many who help to make what *can* happen, happen. Thanks to you, our members and friends, for supporting your Kirk Session in the decisions we have made, and to those who are patiently waiting in the wings for their opportunity to get back to work! Your time is coming.

And we thank God for bringing us again to Christmas, when we see and know 'God is with us' into 2021. We wish you all a blessed and safe Christmas.

Mary Gordon, Session Clerk



During this past year it was difficult for us to arrange flower deliveries, but with Church services being held again we have now resumed, although we must observe safe practices. Unfortunately it will not be possible to allow everyone access to put flowers in themselves, but if you wish to make a donation to the flower fund or suggest a name for a delivery please contact Lyn or Elizabeth.

CHRISTMAS SERVICES at Chalmers Memorial Church

Much of our worship this year has been – of necessity – through Podcasts and written scripts. These continue to be produced on a weekly basis and will always be available to listen to or read each Sunday for the foreseeable future.

- Here is a quick reminder of how to access the *Podcast* - online via the usual website at: <https://chalmersmemorialchurch2020.podbean.com/>
- Or, for those with *NO internet* access, phone the local rate phone number 01875 444 495. After the welcome message you simply wait 20 seconds approx. and the audio should begin.

We are now also holding 2 weekly services:

Wednesdays at 2pm and Sundays at 11am

These services are identical.

The Podcast contains the same basic service, except without the music.

This year, regrettably, we cannot offer as many services as we would like for Advent and Christmas - mainly for practical reasons like hall cleaning. However, we are very happy to be able to host the following services:

Wednesday 9th at 2pm & Sunday 13th December at 11am

A service of Readings and Carols

Wednesday 16th at 2pm and Sunday 20th December at 11am

A "Socially Distant" re-telling of the Christmas Story!

Thursday 24th December at 6pm

Informal Christmas Eve Service

Sunday 27th December at 11am

Service for the last Sunday of the year

Sunday 3rd January at 11am

A service for the first Sunday in the New Year (led by Ian Bulloch)



Please note that there will be NO Wednesday services on either 23rd December or 30th December. Our normal pattern of services will then resume on Wednesday 6th January at 2pm and Sunday 10th January at 11am.

Please note that numbers at ALL services are restricted to 45, due to Government rules. Attendance at ANY of these services will require the usual pre booking by phoning either the Manse on (01875) 812 225 or emailing the Minister at

rallison@churchofscotland.org.uk



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