

Autumn/Winter Newsletter

Dear Friends,

I cannot believe it is almost Christmas again! And yet it is such a lovely time of year when we are able to share God's love and the birth of Christ with so many people. In particular, those who don't seem to want to have anything to do with church but still want to celebrate Christmas.

I think one of the things that never fails to amaze me about this congregation is your talents and the creativity. We have just held our Remembrance Services, made all the more poignant with the displays of knitted poppies both inside the Church and outside as well - those that flowed from the window and over the cross; those that held their heads up proudly on the grass; and those on the railings. So many people have stopped me to say how beautiful it is, and there have been lots of likes and shares on Facebook so, on behalf of everyone I say a BIG thank you to everyone who enabled our display to be so meaningful.

We are now heading to Christmas, another time of creativity. Soon our church will be filled with Christmas trees from the church and the community, and we will welcome so many people in to see them and the wonderful drawings from the children that will adorn our walls. No one can doubt the celebration of Christmas when they come among us.

We know that Christmas is far more than trees, and that is where we realise we are celebrating creativity in its rawest, most beautiful, state. God looked at those on the earth and asked himself: 'How can I help them understand? I gave them The Law in the 10 Commandments but they have made them into a list of restrictive rules and not seen what lay behind. I have made them promises and asked that all they need to do is listen to what I ask of them - for what I ask of them will lead to happiness and peace across the earth. But they do not listen, or they give up easily because they do not see how the promises can come true. What will I do? How can I show them?'

And then He realised that all He needed to do was to come among us. So, using His creative imagination He came to us in the form of His Son, Jesus. Born as a baby we would know that Jesus really understands - he faced all the things growing up that other boys faced. So God said: 'I want you to know that I do understand how hard it is, how sad life can be, how there are difficult decisions to be made, and what pain feels like'.

We saw, we heard, we know. There is nothing greater than God's love for us, and nothing will bring more peace and love into the world than by listening to him and responding as we know he would want.

So, on Christmas Eve, close your eyes, listen for the cry of that newborn baby and know that Jesus is with us; that God is love.

**This very day in David's town your Saviour was born -
Christ the Lord**

*Yours in Christ
Alison*

A SPECIAL THANK YOU!

We would like to thank you all for the most wonderful day you gave us for our wedding. It was the celebration we thought we would be unable to have.

Alison & Iain

SPECIAL SERVICES

We have enjoyed some very special services in the church in the last few months;



- on 10 September we shared in the blessing of Alison and Iain's marriage and enjoyed an amazing buffet in the Hall afterwards



- the Harvest Festival on 1 October 2023 combined tradition - 'We plough the fields' is always a roof raiser! - with stories from our modern world, about street children, slavery and domestic abuse. Our generous food donations were passed on to the

Castle Douglas Food Bank and the stunning display of flowers enhanced the autumn theme of the service.



- on Remembrance Sunday, 12th November 2023 we were honoured to have Mark Jardine, Deputy Lord-Lieutenant of the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright lay a wreath in our church and also to have the Standards of the Castle Douglas Branch of Legion Scotland and the Girl Guides.



PETER FRENCH

There was great sadness across our church family on hearing of the death of Peter French on 28th September 2023. Our Church Officer for many years, Peter was usually the first and last face we saw in church on a Sunday morning. So it was fitting that the Sanctuary was so full for his funeral and heard the anecdotes and tributes paid by his son William about Peter's passion for his birthplace of Glasgow, his lifelong friendships, career in printing ending a Castle Douglas High School, happy family life; and we all enjoyed the beautiful rendition of 'Sailing' by our choir, reflecting Peter's love of sailing and boats since his early days and National Service in the Royal Navy. Many people have got stories and thoughts about Peter – a few are shared here:



From Oonagh Dee, who led the service: *'Peter was the essence of kindness and helpfulness to me when I first came to CD. Always cheerful always encouraging, a real gentleman'*.

Neighbour, friend and fellow Elder, Richard Brown reflected *'Peter and I knew each other for over four decades and so there are many happy memories to look back on. always teased him about having wee legs and a wee shuffle and being a wee Glasgow 'keelie'! We joined the choir at the same time and so had trips to Auchencairn as well as singing in the church in Castle Douglas for the last ten years. He was a devoted husband too, he never left our house without taking home 'a wee biscuit for Mary'!*

'Peter was always very interested in and loved to know what was happening at Castle Douglas Bowling Club and Kirkcudbright Pipe Band. If ever there was anything in the Glasgow Herald about bowling or piping it was cut out and given to us'. Helen and Ian Wemyss

'I arrived in Castle Douglas High School in 1990 to find the welcoming figure of Peter already in post. His printer skills had been recognized at a time when the Authority had embarked in a contract with Risograph to provide photocopying needs. This was a match made in heaven for Peter; an office, a printing machine, a kettle, teabags, and over 600 people young and old to interact with every day. In every aspect of this task he was excellent. Woe betide a maintenance engineer who failed to treat his machine with due respect. However, it was his ability to speak to all, young and old, and to make them feel important because he had a genuine interest in them that made his Office a popular place in the School – even to a raw Head Teacher. His retirement was a sad day for the School and his passing a sad day for the Church Community'. Iain Proudfoot

It was thanks to Peter talking to Eileen Cawthorne that I first became aware that the job of organist at Castle Douglas would be available. There will never be a Church Officer like Peter. He was always there to welcome us when we arrived to practice on a Sunday morning. He always made sure that we both had a brew and a goodie bag for Hugh. To Hugh, Castle Douglas Parish Church will always be 'Peter's house' Callum and Sze Ying

Peter enjoyed a good relationship with our daughter Ailsa, He was always interested in her and she repaid it by visiting him when here' Iain McDonald

IT'S BEGINNING TO LOOK A LOT LIKE CHRISTMAS!.....

There's lots going on in our church in the coming weeks to celebrate the birth of Christ, and we hope very much that you and your family and/or friends will come along to share in the fellowship at this special time of year. It's all free, our building is lovely and warm, and everyone can count on a great welcome!

Our Festival of Christmas



A dazzling forest of trees decorated by different church groups in a very unique way (have you ever seen a fried egg on a tree before? or a toilet?!) and a special tree with photographs of and by Peter French as a tribute, will be on display along with posters of robins (P1-3) and 'child in the manger' (P4-7) made by Primary School pupils. Music and light refreshments are also part of the experience

Thursdays 7, 14 and 21 December 6pm - 8pm
Fridays 8, 15 and 22 December 10am-2pm
Saturdays 2, 9, 16 and 23 December 10am-2pm

Coming along to our church during these times can be part of your advent preparation for the arrival of the Christ-child; a break from the busy-ness of cards and shopping and wrapping; or for those who find Christmas festivities too much to cope with, it is an opportunity to draw comfort in relative stillness. Whatever your reason for coming along, we pray that you will benefit from the fellowship and feel God's presence.

Christmas Events and Services 2023/2024

Sunday 10th December - Gift Service 11am-12noon - please bring along a suitable present for a child to be distributed by Social Work Services to children in care. (Please do not wrap the gifts)

Tuesday 12th December – Lessons and Carols at 7pm followed by refreshments

Sunday 24th December – Christmas Eve Family Service at 11am-12noon

Sunday 24th December – Christmas Eve Watchnight Service at 11.30pm – c12.15am

Sunday 31st December – Church Service at 11am-c12noon

Sunday 7th January – Church Service at 11am –12noon which will include some Ukrainian Christmas features. This will support Ukrainians staying in our region who are far from home, and whose country is still at war, by marking their Christmas Day.



REMEMBER TO KEEP THE STAMPS FROM YOUR CHRISTMAS MAIL!! Please cut them off the envelope with a border of about half an inch and bring them in to the church. They are sent off to the national church and support World Mission.

“TREASURER’S TROVE”

Our church Treasurer’s Account is sitting around the £50k mark which is considerably down from the year 2023 starting position at £70k. The main reason for this is £12k spent late 2022/early 2023 to fully refurbish the (upstairs) toilets in the Church Hall plus carrying out other maintenance and repair works needed within the church, hall and manse properties.

We are awaiting payment for 4 months “solar panels” output, plus an 11months Gift aid reclaim-so hopefully we will end the year in a decent enough cash position.

Our energy supply contracts have just come to an end-so our new annual gas and electricity costs will be about **double** that of our previous 4 year contract-we will be with Eon-using 100% green electricity.

All other costs – e.g. insurance, council tax, broadband, video and music licences etc are all on the way up-so as I have said to the kirk session-we need to “run to stand still”-by trying to increase donations, ask for legacies and continue to do the great fund-raising events we do each year-such as coffee mornings, quizzes, craft sales etc.

To simplify the Sunday service collections, we plan to “do away” with the old blue and white envelopes (gift aid and non-giftaid respectively). From the start of the new year – i.e. 1st January 2024 - if you are a tax payer (and previously used a blue envelope)-you can then put your donation in one of the newer “gift aid” envelopes-and once I know your name and address you just need to put your name, the date and postcode on each week -rather than filling in all the other details. A supply of these newer “gift aid envelopes will be kept in a drawer in the table to your right as you enter the kirk and we will also put some out near the hymn books every week for anyone to uplift. For those that are “Non-taxpayers” -and used the white envelopes please just put your cash donation into one of the 2 collection fonts in the church.

I attach a photo of the gift aid envelopes to be used from 1st January 2024



IF you prefer, or already donate to the church via Standing Order, that is excellent and the best method of the lot as far as I am concerned. Please let me know if you need the church account details to set up a monthly SO.

For those who currently pay by SO, I would be grateful if you can confirm if you are a taxpayer or not to keep the records up to date - you can phone me or just text me on 07889 475191, or drop me an e-mail to colin.kennedy1959@outlook.com

PLEASE KEEP DONATING AS MUCH AS YOU CAN - IT IS VERY MUCH APPRECIATED.

Over and out,
Your Treasurer.

We've welcomed the return of **Coffee Mornings** in 2023 with the first two raising over £800 for church funds in 2023, organised by the Young Women's Group and the Craft and Cuppa Group.



GET INVOLVED -SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE!

Come and join us for **Craft and Cuppa** (and goes without saying: a blether) on Tuesdays 10am in the Hall (crafts not essential). Some of us work on our own projects others are knitting scarfs and hats for the homeless people in Glasgow—



while others just chat and enjoy a cuppa. We usually have over 20 coming along and we are always ready to welcome new folk.

And you don't need to wait for a special occasion to buy something for yourself or a gift for family or friends - our Gifts Stall, selling our own craftwork and produce, is at the back of the church. Come and have a browse!



(The recent jars of Apple Jelly and packs of tablet were highly commended!!)

Women, doesn't matter how "young" or "old" you are, you are welcome to come along and join the **Young Women's Group** (part of the Church of Scotland Guild) on the first Tuesday evening of the month from September - May. In January the Group will meet on the 9th and the speaker will be Endang Telfer – Cookery. The annual Quiz will be on Tuesday 6th February.

There will be two **Coffee Mornings** organised for the start of 2024, the next one by the Men's Breakfast Club and then the Choir. Look out for dates in the Intimations, noticeboard at the church, posters in shops and on social media.

Please come along and enjoy delicious home baking and endless cuppas for only £4, while raising funds for our church and sharing in this fellowship!



The **Book Club** meets in the Session Room on the LAST Thursday of the month at 7pm. It's for anyone, who comes to church -or not - who enjoys reading. A new book is picked by the group each month – it's very informal and you might find yourself enjoying something you never thought you would!



A welcome addition to our choir's singing during Sunday worship has been the piece of reflective music after the sermon, encouraging us to contemplate us. Thank you to Callum and Sze Ying for putting so much thought into the chosen pieces and their support for our occasional young guest pianists. If you'd like to add your voice to our joyful noise and **join the Choir** please speak to Callum.

Men, of all ages come together on the 1st Saturday of the month, from 8:30 to 10:30, in the Church Hall for a time of friendship and delicious food in the **MEN'S BREAKFAST CLUB**. Do come along!



Each Sunday there are flowers in the Church and after the Service they are taken to someone who might be poorly, bereaved or celebrating. I would appreciate if a few folk would be willing to add their names to the rota for **our Floral Ministry** to provide the flowers. I look forward to your call. Helen Wemyss Tel: 07840599046



FOLLOW, FOLLOW, FOLLOW ON SOCIAL MEDIA..

Remember that our church has a Facebook page 'Castle Douglas Parish Church' (we've got 180 followers) and an 'X' (formerly known as Twitter) account '@CDParishChurch' so please do join us and keep up to date with our news and photos, and also with organisations that we support like our local schools, the Development Forum and the Church of Scotland. We have a website too www.castledouglasparish.org.uk with photographs of past events and information about coming events. Our new Presbytery of the South West also has a Facebook page which you can join; and a website coming soon.....

THREE LOOS AND A TAP!



You may have noticed that wooden boxes have appeared in our toilets. These are for your spare change and the money raised helps build toilets for the 1.7 billion people who don't have anywhere 'safe' to go to the loo, Our church has already raised enough money in the last few months - for three 'toilet twins' in Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Malawi and the installation of a tap in Brazil.

The certificates and pictures are on display in the church foyer. How amazing is it that just by spending a penny in our church we can help so many people with this fundamental need around the world?

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