

Encouraging YOU to know JESUS

*Christ be our light! Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.*

Please note that our Interim Moderator and Locum, Rev. Rona Young, will be visiting those with pastoral needs by telephone during the Covid-19 pandemic. If in need of pastoral care, please contact Rona by telephone on (01292) 471982.

The Minister's Message

Welcome and Intimations

Good morning and a very warm welcome to everyone watching this online service from Newton Wallacetown Church.

As I said last Sunday, it is now much colder and, as the church heating has to be switched off before the service, the services are taking place in the Church Hall on Sundays at 11am. If you wish to book a seat for Sunday 20th December please phone Sheila Innes on Thursday 17th December between 9.30am and 12 noon. Telephone: 01292 269705. You can also email her between 12 noon on Thursday 17th December and 12 noon on Friday 18th December. Email: sheilainnes11@gmail.com.

The service on Sunday 20th December will be conducted by Gary McCleary and the children are taking part in a virtual Nativity – obviously being recorded in their own homes. You will also see members of the congregation with very short Christmas messages.

The Extraordinary Times will be available this morning at 12 noon, and we join together as a church for our prayer time at 12.30pm, beginning with the Lord's Prayer and continuing with our own personal prayers.

As well as the box for donations for the Foodbank being at the entrance to the church hall, the driveway at the church will be open between 2 and 3pm this afternoon for donations and this is the last day to bring your gifts for the children at Newton Primary School.

Advance Notice – the Prayer Meeting for the three churches in the North Ayr Grouping will resume in the New Year, meeting by Zoom on the second Monday evening of each month. The first one will be led by NWC on Monday 11th January at 6.30pm.

Call to worship for the third Sunday in Advent: It was foretold by the prophet Isaiah, "*The virgin shall be with child and give birth to a Son, and will call him Immanuel.*"

Hymn "Hark the glad sound, the Saviour comes"

Prayer

Loving God,

as the celebration of Christmas draws nearer, we are busy preparing for it, although in so many ways it is different this year. But we are hoping to spend Christmas Day with our families, to exchange gifts and spend time together. In the midst of our planning, we can so easily forget what matters most of all – responding to the wonderful gift of your Son.

You have come to us in Christ,

forgive us when we fail to respond to you.

We are all aware, Lord God, we have never experienced a Christmas like this one, when we are unable to sing the familiar carols, when we are unable to see the Nativity in the church, when we do not have the Christmas social in the church hall, and when we cannot really see our friends as we have to be socially distant and wear masks. Please help us not to dwell on the negatives, but to enter into the true spirit of this season,

**You have come to us in Christ,
forgive us when we fail to respond to you.**

Forgive us for sometimes presuming that we know better than you, and we expect you to follow our will. Teach us, we pray, that you are beyond our highest imagining, and you do things in your own time and in your own way. Help us to trust in your wisdom and your purpose.

**You have come to us in Christ,
forgive us when we fail to respond to you.**

Father God, touch our lives again at this time, as we remember the coming of Jesus. Help us, we pray, through these difficult days, and may our confidence be deepened in your eternal love and purpose. May we show your love and your care so that Christ may come again this Christmas to those who have lost hope, to those in greatest need.

**You have come to us in Christ,
help us to respond.**

This we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen.

The lighting of the 3rd Advent candle: Mary

We light this candle for all God's bearers
saying "yes" to God's challenges,
accepting the peace and joy of an unknown future.
God as we wait for your promise,
Give light, give love.

Children's Talk – Lisa Bell

Hymn "*Joy to the world*"

Bible reading **Luke 1: 26 – 38** read by Sheila Innes

The birth of Jesus foretold

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you.'

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of

the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,³³ and he will reign over Jacob's descendants for ever; his kingdom will never end.'

34 'How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?'

35 The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So, the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month.³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail.'

38 'I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May your word to me be fulfilled.' Then the angel left her.

Hymn with the Praise Band: "Mary did you know?"

Sermon "Mary did you know?"

Let us pray,

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

Tuesday was being called V-Day. The good news was that the first person had been vaccinated against Covid-19. It was repeated time and time again on television, but this morning we heard the **Good News** with a capital "G" and a capital "N."

This was the announcement of the most wonderful event that has ever happened in the world – **the Incarnation and the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ**. The Incarnation is the result of Jesus being born of a human mother with the Holy Spirit. Jesus' birth took place as all births do, but the divine miracle is how he was conceived.

The angel Gabriel appears to Mary and tells her that she was highly favoured by God. This must have been a really frightening encounter for a young girl in her teens. He says to her, "*You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name, Jesus.*"

Mary would know enough of the history of her people, to understand that this was not just any child that the messenger was talking about. This was the long-awaited Messiah – the deliverer of God's people.

We would imagine that she thought, "why me? I am not even married. Joseph and I are engaged, but I am still a virgin." But the messenger went on to tell Mary that this coming child would be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. He will occupy the throne of his father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever and there would be no end to his kingdom.

This morning, let us think in more detail about Mary.

1 First of all, Mary did not volunteer for this awesome responsibility.

If a list had been drawn up of the most eligible to become the mother of Jesus, Mary's name would not have been mentioned, but Mary had no say in this. It was God's choice and she was totally surprised by it. However, Mary could have refused, Mary could have said no. God does not force his will on anyone. He chooses, but we have to accept the choosing.

To Mary's credit, she did not argue, she did not question the wisdom of God but instead, this devout young Jewish girl from Nazareth answers, "*How can this be since I am a virgin?*".

The angel answered, “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So, the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.*” This child was not to be conceived in the normal human manner but through the work of the Holy Spirit.

I know there are those, even Christian writers, who do not believe in the Virgin Birth but, if this did not happen, how could we speak about the Incarnation? That word means, “*the embodiment of God the Son in human flesh,*” or to put it more simply, God becoming man.

There are times when God can act in our lives too. We are caught off-guard and usually disturbed by the experience.

I was at an evening service in one of the small halls in Troon Old Parish Church – this was back in 1982. It was often a member of the congregation who spoke at that service, but all I can remember is that the last hymn was, “*Amazing grace*” and I found myself fighting tears. I was quite disturbed by that and found it difficult to sleep that night.

A few weeks later I went to see Rev. John Webster who was the minister at that time, and told him what had happened. He explained that something similar had happened to him when at a youth camp. He asked me if I felt God was calling me to do something. I said yes, but had no idea what it was. Before I left, he prayed that God would show me what he was calling me to do.

Our two daughters at that time were six and four years old and were at the stage of watching “*Playschool*” on the television. I was ironing when the thought suddenly struck me, “Mr Webster said something similar had happened to him, he is a minister and I am to be a minister!” It was like being struck in the stomach as I thought that.

I told the rest of this story at the Guild back in March – not long before lockdown.

Different people feel called by God in different ways and usually think, “why me?” Over the years when I was working fulltime I found that, whenever I approached someone to become an Elder, there was always a hesitation. So often, people have said to me that they do not feel worthy to accept and can think of many reasons to say no. We only see the positive once we have said yes and God always honours his call.

I am sure all of the members of the worship team in this church can relate to this, and it is a great privilege when God chooses one of us to fulfil his purpose.

We are to respond to what God is calling us to do. He is inviting us into what he is doing, and we have the choice of accepting it, and when we do, our lives will never be the same again.

These moments when we are really called by God can overwhelm us, they can disrupt our lives BUT, if we are willing to trust God and say yes to him, our lives take on new meaning and new purpose.

As we heard in Luke chapter 1 at verse 38 Mary says, “*I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me as you have said.*” Mary humbly accepts the will of God.

2 Secondly, Mary did not know what the “favour of the Lord” entailed.

The “*favour of the Lord*” would no doubt bring shame upon her, and Joseph and her family.

The “*favour of the Lord*” would mean a long, long journey to Bethlehem, where the only available shelter would be a stable.

The “*favour of the Lord*” would mean she would give birth without any help, except from her inexperienced husband.

How could she know that the “*favour of the Lord*” would mean that the baby’s first cradle would be an animal’s feeding trough?

How could she know that the “*favour of the Lord*” would mean having to run away with Joseph and the baby to Egypt and later come back to Nazareth, to escape Herod’s decree?

How could she know that “*the favour of the Lord*” would mean that year after year would pass in routine life in Nazareth, and then, after so many years, this encounter with an angel would seem just like a dream?

How could she know that the “*favour of the Lord*” would mean that one day her firstborn would be rejected, have to go through a mock trial, and the agony of crucifixion?

How could she know that the joy of that morning would lead to circumstances about thirty-three years later that would break her heart?

God’s favour does not guarantee peace, prosperity, pleasure and unending happiness. On many occasions God’s favour is discovered through great difficulty, or heartache or seeming failure. It is discovered through confronting a difficult situation, working through it and discovering that it has actually enriched life beyond anything that can be imagined.

Facing the hard moments and dark events of life is not only frightening, but may cause us to doubt the reality of our faith in the power of God. Yet, if we remain faithful, Jesus teaches us that we will discover the strength to continue, even in the darkness.

God’s favour does not allow us to escape the hard times in our lives – and going through this pandemic has been, and still is, especially hard for so many people – but we are enabled, with God’s help, to grow in grace and trust. We discover that, with God’s favour, we are stronger to cope with life as it comes.

3 Thirdly, Mary heard the promise that her child would take the throne of his father David, and that his kingdom would never end.

Mary would not grasp the full significance of this wonderful promise. She might envisage that under Jesus, his kingdom would grow forever in power, territory and influence.

It was only after experiencing the crucifixion and resurrection that Mary understood, in part, that his kingdom was a spiritual kingdom that would last forever.

I wonder if Mary or any of Jesus’ early followers would recognise his kingdom today? They could only think of the world as they knew it at that time.

Today, Jesus’ kingdom knows no end – either geographically or in terms of time. The centuries have rolled on and Jesus rules in the hearts and lives of his faithful followers and his kingdom has outlasted any earthly kingdom and will never come to an end.

What would Mary think if she could see the wonder and the power of Jesus’ kingdom today? It has grown to embrace millions, and changed so many lives throughout the centuries.

Mary said, “*I am the Lord’s servant, may it be to me as you have said.*” Mary surrendered herself to God, and we too are called to surrender **our** lives to God.

For each and every one of us, there is something surprising, something unexpected, something new that God will do through you and through me, if we are willing to be servants of the Lord.

Christmas is not just about what happened to a peasant girl in Palestine so long ago. Christmas is about giving and we are so caught up in thinking about the presents that we will give to our family and friends that we forget that we are called to give, to surrender our lives and our hearts to God.

Amen



Hymn “*In the bleak mid-winter*”

Prayer

Let us pray,

Eternal and ever-blessed God, we thank you that in all the different circumstances of our lives, especially during these long months of the pandemic, you are a God we can depend upon, always faithful, always true, always loving and always merciful.

We thank you for this time of looking back and remembering the birth of your Son. He brought light in the darkness, as was foretold by the prophet Isaiah. This is also a time of looking forward and anticipating his coming again but, above all, it is a time for the present moment, for examining our lives, searching our hearts, a time to recognise more fully that Jesus is with us every moment of every day.

O God our heavenly Father, we pray now in love for the many people of our world whom we do not know but who are suffering or anxious at this time: the hungry, the thirsty and the homeless, and those suffering through Covid-19, those who are so anxious and whose mental health is being affected.

We pray now in love for the people we know, for our families, our friends and our neighbours, and for our brothers and sisters in Newton Wallacetown Church. We pray for those who have been bereaved, those who are ill, either in hospital or at home, and those who are especially worried about a loved one. In a few moments of silence, we name them before our heavenly Father.....

Lord God, bless each person for whom we have prayed. You came to us in Jesus Christ, and he brought light into the darkness all these years ago. May he now bring light into the darkness of our world, enduring a pandemic and so desperately needing light today.

He brought light, he brought hope and he brought joy. Help each us to do the same.

This we pray through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, Amen.

Hymn “*Tell out my soul, the greatness of the Lord*”

Benediction

“*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you this day and for evermore,*”

Amen.

Rona

Date for your new diary Please note that the **monthly prayer meetings** for churches within the **North Ayr Grouping** will re-commence on Zoom on **Monday 11th January 2021** at **6.30pm** when **Rona** will lead the meeting on behalf of NWC.

Specific information about how to join the first meeting will be intimated and in the Extraordinary Times on 3rd and 10th January.

Please remember in your prayers this week all of the people below in hospital, care homes or in their own homes:-

Mr Donald Grant	Mrs Jean Allardyce
Mrs Anne McDonald	Mrs Judith McDowall
Mrs May Wilkinson	Mrs Maude Smillie
Mrs Catherine MacDonald	Mrs Heather McLeod
Mrs Gina McKnight	Mrs Isabel Calder
Mrs Betty McPherson	Mrs Rena Bell
Mrs Alison Wilson	Mrs Anna Irving

Please let the Session Clerk know of any member/relative who goes in to hospital or is ill at home. For those in hospital please ensure you have their given Christian name which may not necessarily be the name by which s/he is usually known.

Prayer Chain Anyone having a request for prayer may contact Sheena Hunter on 01292 570200 or e-mail her at sheenachunter@hotmail.com

NB. Re-start of public worship Please note that we are open for worship again. If you wish to book a seat for Sunday 20th December, please phone Sheila on **(01292) 269705** between **9.30am** and **12.00noon** on **Thursday** or contact her via e-mail at sheilainnes11@gmail.com between **12.00noon** on **Thursday** and **12.00noon** on **Friday**.

A Newton Wallacetown Merry Christmas While things need to be a little different this year, let's wish other members season's greetings virtually by families, couples or individuals submitting a short video to brassjulie@aol.com **no later than today, 13th December**. Neil will put all the videos together and the result will be shown at the end of the church service on Sunday 20th December. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with any questions. I look forward to seeing your videos.

Julie Eggo

Christmas Giving As we look towards Christmas and celebrating the birth of Jesus, God's greatest gift, we ask you all to think about giving. Finances in the church have been difficult this year and, whilst we appreciate that this is the case for many, we ask that you consider whether you can find something extra for the church during December.

We are called to steward the resources we have been given. If we give generously, God will give generously to us. Thank you.

Janis Meredith

Online Donations Do you shop online? If you do please remember that you can raise donations for the church at no extra cost to yourself. All you have to do is go to:- <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/> and register Newton Wallacetown Church of Scotland as your charity, then shop at the many different retailers who donate through the site. Remember though, that you have to go to the retailer through easyfundraising.

You can also raise donations when you shop at Amazon. Instead of shopping at the usual site, go to <https://smile.amazon.co.uk/> and register Ayr: Newton Wallacetown Church of Scotland as your charity and the business will make a donation to the church on qualifying purchases.

Giving Tree A big thank you to all who have helped make this year's Giving Tree appeal a success. All of the gift tags have been taken which is remarkable given the restrictions. Although it has been announced that school holidays are to remain unchanged, could I please ask that any remaining gifts be brought to the church by **this Sunday 13th December** between **2.00pm and 3.00pm** in order that the school teachers have time to organise Santa's visit?

Irene Gibson

Birthdays In the coming week, we wish a very Happy Birthday to each of the following:-

16th December Margaret-Anne McTurk

17th December Rena Bell and Robert Gemmell



Christmas greetings I would like to wish all my friends at Newton Wallacetown Church the compliments of the season. Have a joy-filled Christmas and a healthy, happy New Year!

Anne McDonald



Salvation Army Food Bank Please note that donations can once again be brought to the halls' vestibule when you attend church or be taken to the church drive between **2.00pm** and **3.00pm** **each Sunday afternoon.**

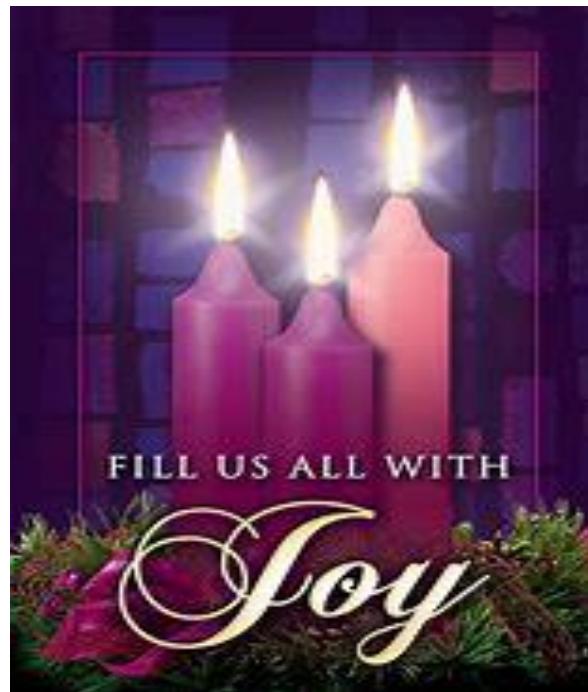
Sincere thanks go to all who bring donations and to those who collect and deliver these each week.

While staff at the food bank are extremely grateful for all gifts, at present they have an abundance of soup, beans, pasta, rice and tuna.

Items in shorter supply at the moment include tinned potatoes, other tinned vegetables, tinned stew, mince etc., Christmas "goodies" eg. biscuits and boxes of chocolates, coffee, toiletries eg. shampoo and soap, household cleaning products.

Advance warning Due to uncertainties over Covid, the Kirk Session has decided that, this year, both the Watchnight and Christmas morning services will only be recorded and streamed rather than have people attending church. Let's hope and pray that the usual services will be possible in 2021.

Remember Streaming of our morning service conducted this week by Rev. Rona Young and next week by Gary McCleary will commence at **11.00am** then our prayer time starts at **12.30pm** with the Lord's Prayer followed by our personal prayers. This helps to bring us together to reach out to him in prayer while we are distancing physically.



Ayr: Newton Wallacetown Church of Scotland

A Scottish Charity Reference Number SC001994

60 Main Street, Ayr, KA8 8EF

Twinned with Nkhata Bay Presbyterian Church, Malawi

Minister: Interim Moderator and Locum –

Rev. Rona Young tel. (01292) 471982 revronyoung@hotmail.com

Session Clerk: John Bell tel. (01292) 371601 johnbell31@gmail.com

Finance Team Leader: Janis Meredith tel. (01292) 476263 nwc.treasurer@yahoo.co.uk

Organist: Dorothy McPherson tel. (01292) 857429 dotmcphersondot@gmail.com

Secretary: Sheila Innes tel. (01292) 269705 sheilainnes11@gmail.com

Youth & Com. Worker: Phil Hawthorne tel. 07828 866447 phil@room60.co.uk

Student Youth Worker: Pauline Johnston tel. 07809 756501 pauline@room60.co.uk

Church Officer: Steven McTurk tel. (01292) 288942 smcturk40@gmail.com

Halls Manager: Isabelle Allardyce tel. 07583055671 nwc.hallmanager@gmail.com

Family Liaison Officer: Gary McCleary tel. 07931 952497 gary@garymcclearyifa.co.uk

Communications e-mail hub: nwcheadlines@gmail.com