



Bowden and Melrose Parish Church

Advent 2020

**He came,
Jesus,
so strangely into our world,
so long ago,
so poor, so helpless.**

**He came,
and his coming changed our world.**

**He was an infant
dependent on his mother
but he was also our God
and with his coming
a great light has shone
on the people who walked in darkness,
a light that will never be dimmed.**

The Manse
Melrose
November 2020

Dear Friends,

We are living through the strangest of times and as I write I don't know what December and Christmas will bring. It will certainly be a very different season of celebration to the one we are used to. In the church we are having to do things differently and you will read about what's planned later in this newsletter.

In a mid-week reflection earlier this month I encouraged you to use this time to think and prepare. How do we make this Christmastime special, and still something to look forward to? How do we involve family and friends but in a different way? How do we reach out to our neighbours, particularly those who will be on their own, and make them feel included? How do we show goodwill and support to those who will struggle even more this year than in previous years? How do we console those for whom 2020 has been a year of pain and loss?

The trimmings that go with our celebration of Christmas may be different this year but the story of Christmas and the message of Christmas remains the same. A wonderful, comforting story of God's love and concern for each one of us.

In the words of the angel to the shepherds, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.' (Luke 2:10-12)

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us'). (Matthew 1:22-23)

May you know God with you and yours this Christmas.

Rosie



Immanuel – God With Us

Lord God, because you were born in a stable,
we remember the homeless -
the dwellers on pavements, in slums and shacks and tents.
You are called Immanuel,
God with us, God with them.

Lord God, because you were hunted by soldiers,
we remember those persecuted and harassed,
and those who live in fear of the bomb and the bullet
and the breaking down of the door.
We remember the peace breakers and the peace makers.
You are called Immanuel,
God with us, God with them.

Lord God, because you fled to Egypt for refuge,
we remember the asylum seekers and refugees in the world today.
You are called Immanuel,
God with us, God with them.

Lord God, because your heart was filled with pity
by the sick and hungry in the crowd which followed you,
we remember the poor, the starving, the sick and injured;
those battling Covid 19 and those caring for them,
those whose lives have been turned upside down.
You are called Immanuel,
God with us, God with them.

Lord God, because you were imprisoned and crucified,
bearing the pain of isolation, the lash and the nails,
we remember prisoners and their families,
those who mourn and those who feel so alone.
You are called Immanuel,
God with us, God with them.

Lord God, because the light of your love could not be extinguished
and you rose from death,
remember us and lead us to life, truth, hope, and love.
For you are called Immanuel,
God with us, God with them.

(Based on a prayer by Geoff Towell)

A letter from Rev Bruce McNicol

Dear Friends,

By the time you read this Nancy and I will have left the Borders to go to live in Stirling. After almost 29 years in Jedburgh we decided that we would move back to the west to be closer to our families. Of those years, almost half was spent as members of Bowden and Melrose congregation. We would want you to know that we have been most happy in the congregation. From the outset, we were warmly welcomed and we have felt quite at home among you.

Through those years each of us has played different roles in the life of the congregation. Nancy has been very much part of the Guild and has found herself “fronting” and promoting Christian Aid and Fairtrade and supporting “Messy Church”. For myself I have been privileged to be asked to conduct public worship and indeed was locum during the vacancy. Each of us therefore has come into contact with a wide range of persons in many different situations and circumstances.

The fellowship of the congregation, its worship and music we will miss greatly. It may seem strange initially to be starting again in a new congregation. However, we are very positive about our move and our family have been encouraging of us. We are convinced that we are doing the right thing. As we embark upon another stage of our lives, so we are grateful for what you have given to us. We will remember you with much fondness and uphold you and the minister in our prayers. We do wish you all good things in the days ahead....uncertain as they appear. We commend you all to God’s care and protection.

Our love we send to you.

Nancy and Bruce McNicol

In normal circumstances we would have organised a farewell lunch for Bruce and Nancy.... They have promised that they will come back ‘once things are more normal’ and we can say goodbye properly! For now, we wish them every blessing in their move and as they settle into a new home and new congregation.

A response from Rev Rosie Frew

Throughout my time at Bowden and Melrose Church both Bruce and Nancy have been a wonderful support.

When I arrived, Bruce was able to give me 'the lowdown' on the parish and congregation! He has provided regular pulpit supply and pastoral cover which I have much appreciated. In the months before lockdown, after our monthly Family Services, I was able to sit with Dave in the congregation while Bruce led us in worship. Ministers don't often get that opportunity. I have greatly enjoyed his friendship and dry humour and have been most grateful for his wisdom and encouragement.

Nancy has been my 'go to' person for so many things and it has been so good to have someone with her passion involved with Christian Aid, Fairtrade, Messy Church and The Guild. I will miss her stories and her humour.... Often on a Sunday Yvonne has to tell us to lock up when we've finished talking and putting the world to rights!

Bruce and Nancy making the move to Stirling will leave a huge gap in our church family. Our loss is another congregation's gain. They are going to be nearer their own family, particularly their new grandson! I hope and pray they settle well and enjoy being 'hands on' grandparents.

Communion Sunday

We will be Celebrating the Lord's Supper on Sunday 29th November at 9.30am in Bowden and 11.00am in Melrose. Inevitably we will have to do things very differently to abide by all the rules that are in place. Those worshipping from home will be able to join us online or by telephone – you just need to have your own piece of bread and a glass of juice or wine. Wherever you are, at home or in church, on our own or with others, we come into our Lord's presence together, share bread and wine together and remember and pray for one another.

Messy Church

Our Messy Church began at Christmas 3 years ago now... where has the time gone? This year resources for Advent and Christmas will be posted on our Facebook page and Church website. Please share them.

Advent Services

During Advent we will be worshipping each week at 9.30am in Bowden Kirk, 11.00am in Melrose Church and on Facebook Live. Services will also be available on our church website and our church phone line.

Sunday 29 November – First Sunday in Advent, Celebration of the Lord's Supper

Sunday 6 December – Second Sunday in Advent. Mary and the Angel.

Sunday 13 December – Third Sunday in Advent. Joseph and the Angel.

Sunday 20 December – Fourth Sunday in Advent. Shepherds and Angels.

Christmas Services

Our Christmas Services attract large numbers and, given the restrictions we are under, we will be worshipping online on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. The Christingle Service, Watchnight Service and Christmas Day Service will be posted on our Facebook page and website in good time for you to watch from the comfort of your home, at a time that suits and with no need to worry about babysitters, icy roads or Christmas dinner. Please share these services with your family and friends.

Sunday 27 December – The churches will be closed. Online and telephone worship will be led by Rt Rev Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly.

Sunday 3 January - The churches will be closed. Online and telephone worship.

Sunday 10 January – Churches reopen for worship.

Financial Update

I hope that you're all staying well in these incredibly challenging times for us all. Your finance committee has now met four times using Zoom which John Henderson has kindly hosted. In this time we have managed to produce our 2019 annual accounts which have been independently examined and lodged with the Office of the Charity Regulator. At the outset of lockdown in March there was much uncertainty and with the buildings closed and no services possible we took the decision to minimise costs but still make sure that the buildings were maintained in a state of readiness for when the time came to reopen for worship. We took the decision to furlough those whom we could and use the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to support our colleagues as they look after the churches. We continue to use this scheme and will for as long as it is appropriate to so do.

We have, obviously, missed out on the fellowship that we gain from our weekly services, Wednesday lunches and all the associated events. We were not able to hold our summer fete which is a major date in the church calendar. Our hall, like many around the country, is empty and silent. It is, however, pleasing that there are groups wishing to use this wonderful facility but this will not be possible until the authorities give permission for the lets to restart. Services in both churches have restarted and I am thankful to Colin Armstrong and his fabric committee for their work in procuring the relevant materials and machinery to allow the services to restart in a safe and sterile environment.

Your finance committee is thankful to you for the ongoing support we receive by way of offerings, be it in the weekly plate at the services, by post or by electronic means. Our donations have held up well, particularly when one considers the drop in hall rents and the loss of the fete fund raising event. We are trying to manage our costs and to meet our ministry and missions contribution for 2020. We had paid the first two of the ten instalments in full and since then have paid one half of each of the next seven months. We would like to meet our commitment by the end of the calendar year, as normal, and we will assess the position over the coming weeks. In our accounts to September we had paid £35,000 to the Church of Scotland with about £20,000 owed and two monthly instalments still to make.

I very much appreciate the support that I receive from the finance committee during this period of dreadful disruption. We have had to develop new skills in how we communicate with each other which has been vital so that we can keep a close eye on our finances, and this will continue to evolve as we maintain a sound base from which to ready ourselves for better times in the future.

Gordon Chisholm, Hon. Treasurer

Keeping in touch....

Our Minister, Rev Rosie Frew - 01896 822217

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Our Church Facebook page –

<https://www.facebook.com/Bowden-and-Melrose-Parish-Church-432876940395760>

Our church website <https://www.bowdenandmelroseparish.org>

You can listen to Sunday worship by phoning 01896 808551 anytime during the following week.

