

Ponteland Methodist Church

Cornerstone

Happy Christmas



December 2022/January 2023

MINISTER'S LETTER

The theme the Methodist Church has chosen for this year's Advent and Christmas material is: **There is Room**. We'll be using that theme in our weekly Advent candle lighting, and on Christmas day, we'll also touch on it at our carol service on December 22nd.



There is room. God makes room for people: for you and for me.

You can see all the key players in the Christmas story in this picture. Baby Jesus is at the centre. The picture shows everyone we'd expect to be there: the light of the star reminds us of the Angels and that there is room for revelation. The other characters shown remind us of different things:

Shepherds: There is room for people experiencing poverty

Wise men: There is room for people who are different

Mary: There is room for all ages and genders

Joseph: There is room for those who are displaced

Sheep: There is room for all nature

You and me: There is room for us

Jesus: There is room for God

Christians believe that God became a human being in Jesus. But Jesus wasn't born in a palace, in comfortable surroundings. Mary and Joseph, his human parents, had to travel to Bethlehem for a census. When they got there, there was no guest room for them. Instead, they had to find room among the animals. Jesus' crib was a manger – the animals' feeding trough. In Jesus, God found room in the world in a place of humility and poverty.

When Jesus was born, God sent angels to visit humble shepherds keeping watch over their sheep in a cold, dark field. God wrote a message in the stars that was read and understood by wise men in a faraway land where people worshipped other gods. People working hard for a low wage and people who weren't religious insiders were the first to hear the good news: baby Jesus was God's Son and He was born for all people, including them and including you and me.

God made room for everyone at Christmas. How are you making room for Him?

God Bless,

Jong

Thursday 15th December at 3pm
at Heddon Methodist Church

'Blue' Christmas / Longest Night Service



An alternative style of Carol Service

providing a reflective quiet space,

away from the commercialism and busyness of Christmas,
acknowledging the pain that so many feel at this time:

- a space for those who might find the Christmas season difficult;
- a space to remember those we would long to see but cannot, for whatever reason;
- a space offering the peace, healing and hope which the season also brings.



Join us – all are welcome

VISION

Mary must have gone through a bad time as she thought about what it would mean to bear a child, if Joseph would not stand by her and adopt the child as his own. Yet she had had her vision: she had received God's promises and His very self and she would not be disobedient. *"Let it happen to me as you have said."* The Lord's word is to be trusted and obeyed, even at the cost of social ostracism or worse. The times were dreadful: the country groaned under Roman occupation. The King of the Jews was a cruel and corrupt murderer. Within Mary's lifetime crosses lined the street of nearby Sepphoris, carrying hundreds of broken bodies of Galilean revolutionaries. Double taxation was being exacted: Roman imposts piled upon the Jewish tithe. Religious conformity was breaking down under the influence of Greek culture and Roman dissipation, much of public piety seemed a sham. The mob was fickle and uncontrollable; robber bands lay in wait on country roads. Yet in this time, a child was to be called JESUS: *"The Lord saves"* and a prophecy of another young woman's child, named *"God is with us"* was remembered. Hard times call for faith, and faith is tested in hard times.

One of the readings for an Advent Sunday in a former lectionary was from Revelation, frightening, symbolic stuff about an evil dragon waiting to seize and devour a newborn child. The child is to be saved: snatched up to the throne of heaven, there to rule all nations; the mother is to be kept safe, hidden in the desert; Satan is fighting out a great battle with the hosts of Heaven upon the earth. This is St. John's vision of the state of the heavenly war: a vision of a church protected yet in struggle; a child born on earth and ruling in Heaven.

If folks dear to us are expecting babies this year, do we rejoice with them, or bemoan the endangered world into which they are to be born? Do their parents give them names of hope and faith? Vision sees an eternal future for those babes, for us, for all who know the Immanuel is enthroned for all eternity, vision knows that *the Lord Saves*. Blessed is the mother who has the faith to praise the Lord and get on with the task of living as a member of the Kingdom of God, even in a dying world. Blessed is the obedient believer, who awaits the Vision, obeys the word, and *"Having done all, stands"* armoured with the full panoply of

faith. But it is not just the faithful believers who are blessed in the incarnation of Almighty God, not just the folk who come to a Sunday service. It is right that we celebrate our God of Action for the visions He gives to the faithful, the obedience which He honours and in which He shares. It is also just as true that the Coming is for all peoples, the Grace by which God gives Himself is grace full and free for all, an uncovenanted, undeserved outpouring of infinite generosity, so He welcomes just as truly to his worship all, regular worshippers or occasional comers or strangers who come to raise their voices in the familiar carols of a folk religion. The Lord gave the Word, the Lord gives the vision.

John M Gill

CHRISTMAS BALLAD

From West and from North and from South and from East,
we all are invited to share in a feast;
You won't find here presents, or wine or rich food;
the usual things to enliven the mood.
For this one is different, so let us prepare,
to shed all the trappings that easily snare;
And share in God's moment of grace and of light,
that chases the gloom of deep winter's dark night.
The bright morning star has shone bold on a place,
where neighbouring shepherds are shining of face;
For they are the ones who first heeded the call,
to search for a baby, the Saviour of all.
Come now, let us join them, with nothing to bring
except for our carol which gladly we sing;
To honour God's Son at His wonderful birth,
who brings joy and peace to all humans on earth.

David H MacDonald



I hope you enjoy this festive recipe. Thank you to Tricia for passing it on to us.

Judith

Torte Noel

For the pastry

6oz plain flour
3oz butter
3oz caster sugar
3 egg yolks

For the filling

5 tbsp mincemeat
6oz ground almonds
6oz caster sugar
3 egg whites
1tsp almond essence
Apricot jam to glaze
Flaked almonds



To make the pastry:

Rub the butter into the flour then stir in the sugar.

Use the beaten egg yolks to bind together.

Line a 8" flan case

Heat the oven to 180C.

Spread the mincemeat in the base of the flan case.

Whisk the egg whites until stiff.

Fold in the sugar, almonds and essence.

Spread on top of the mincemeat.

Bake for 1 hour, until golden.

Add the apricot jam glaze and sprinkle with flaked almonds



MITIGATING ENERGY COST INCREASES WHILST REDUCING CLIMATE IMPACT

Has your energy company increased your direct debit payments?

All energy companies have increased their customers' direct debits. This should be done in line with the increased gas and electricity unit rates, but often the increase is larger. Reasons for this include energy companies using estimated meter readings, inflated usage estimates and not including the £400 "Energy Bills Discount" and/or the "Energy Price Guarantee" reduced unit rates in direct debit calculations.

Abigail's energy company told her that her monthly direct debit for gas and electricity would be doubling due to increased energy prices. After checking her bills, calculating usage and the corresponding monthly payment, Abigail found that the increase was excessive and was able to ask the energy company to set a lower direct debit.

If you need some help calculating your monthly direct debit please get in touch with me, Andrew, agonnet@zohomail.eu

Are you not using, or reducing use of, your central heating to save money?

Living in a cold, sometimes damp, house is not only uncomfortable, it can also be unhealthy. By heating only the rooms you use, you can be warm and bills can be reduced. Radiators can be safely turned down or off in other rooms, the heating will then just heat rooms you use. Close the doors to unheated rooms to stop the cold cooling down the rest of the house. Adjusting the thermostat to a lower temperature, down to about 18 degrees, will also save a surprising amount. Also, use the timeswitch so that heating is only on when you need it, it doesn't need to be on overnight while you are sleeping.

Did you know that washing and drying laundry uses a surprising amount of energy?

After being told how much power his tumble dryer and electric iron uses, Jonathan saved time and money by reducing the amount of clothes he ironed. He also reduced his tumble dryer use by using the fastest spin speed on his washing machine and partially drying his clothes on an airer or, on sunny days, the washing line, before finishing drying them in the dryer (if

necessary).

These are good ways to save energy and reduce your bills. The washing machine also uses a lot of energy to heat water, so wash clothes on the lowest temperature possible to get them clean.

Are your electrical appliances on standby overnight?

According to the Energy Saving Trust, around £65 a year can be saved if appliances are switched off at the plug instead of being left on standby.

After everyone has gone to bed Leah checks her smart meter display to see how much electricity is still being used. She found that by switching appliances off at the plug she can reduce the overnight electricity use from over 100 watts to around 50 watts, saving about £65 a year.

Could the hot water in your taps be cooler?

Heating the hot water supply is another big user of energy. To save money, hot water temperature can be turned down at the combi-boiler or tank thermostat. If there is no thermostat, try reducing the time setting on the hot water timeswitch so that water is not heated so much. *It is important though to heat water in a tank to about 60 degrees once a month to prevent bacteria from growing.*

Do you like a long shower or bath?

So do I, but, unfortunately, a long shower in a power shower can use as much water, and hence energy and money, as a bath. Taking shorter showers and fewer baths will reduce fuel bills.



Is there a cold draught?

The draught-proof seals around doors and windows age over time and sometimes come loose. It's a good idea to check the seals and fit new ones as necessary as cold air coming into your house means hot air, that you have paid to heat, is being lost to outside. Door and window seals can be bought quite cheaply in DIY shops.

Is there 10" to 12" of loft insulation in your loft?

The recommended amount of loft insulation has increased over the years. If yours was installed a while ago, it might be time to add some more on top. It's worth checking: spending a little now will reduce bills and the new insulation will pay for itself after a few years in bill savings.

Do you want to find out more?

Here are some links advice leaflets etc. which will help you to save energy:

<https://www.cse.org.uk/resources/category:advice-leaflets>

<https://www.cse.org.uk/resources/category:videos>

<https://cat.org.uk/info-resources/free-information-service/>

<https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/hub/quick-tips-to-save-energy/>

Any questions?

Drop me an email: Andrew, agonnet@zohomail.eu

Andrew Gonnet

WHAT'S ON

Women Together

15 Dec – Christmas Music and Carols

12 Jan – Members' Afternoon – What cherished item would you save from a fire? + Bring and Buy

26 Jan – Joan and Harry Gilbert – Awesome New Zealand

Men's Forum

12 Jan - Dinner at Blackbird - speaker Rev Jona Sewell

9 Feb – Technology to keep us moving – Rev Tim Woolley



Greetings from sunny Menorca! We want to say a big 'Thank You' for your generosity and kindness. With the gifts we received from Blucher, Westerhope and the Circuit, we were able to spend half term relaxing. We are settling well in to our new life. Sending you our love, **Juliet and Rebecca**.

ROBSON & COWAN 100 YEARS

Robson & Cowan was created in 1922 when cousins Joe Robson and Tom Cowan took over John Lamb & Sons' agricultural business.

Located in the rural Scots Gap, the new Robson and Cowan business was ideally located to serve the surrounding farmland within a 10 to 20-mile radius.



In 1936 Tom married Elizabeth Cowan, and together they had six sons named Tom, John, George, Andy, David and Frank, all of whom played their part in the business. After surviving economic recession and the war years, the family decided diversification was the

route to prosperity in post-

war Britain and began renting and then selling black and white television sets to show coverage of The Queen's coronation in 1953.

Having started as an agricultural business, today Robson & Cowan are stockists for electrical goods from televisions and cookers to washing machines and dryers, along with small appliances such as microwaves and kettles.

The store also stocks a top-quality range of country clothing and footwear from brands including Barbour, Ariat and Hoggs of Fife, along with equestrian clothing and equipment.

Robson & Cowan stocks garden machinery from garden tractors to chainsaws.

The business serves a range of customers across Northumberland, parts of County Durham and up to the Scottish Borders from farmers to domestic customers.

Since its beginning in Scots Gap, the company has expanded to serve customers throughout rural communities.

The company is celebrating its 100-year anniversary by holding a competition to thank its customers without whose support the business's success would not have been possible.

Andrew Cowan

MEANDERS 2022

The last walk of the year was round Shaftoe Crags and Bolam Lake. Nice sharp day, bit of wind but lovely walk. We had lunch overlooking the lake and watching two swans practise their synchronised dance. After walking round the lake and back to our cars we went back to the Church where Syd and Margaret had mulled fruit punch and mince pies ready for us. Some others joined us.

The first walk of 2023 will be on Saturday 7th January before our Annual Dinner at Ponteland Golf Club. Meal choices must be with Alan Groves by 18th December.

It is not possible to go to the Lakes in May and we are actively looking at an alternative event.

Walks are usually less than 10 miles long and if you wish to join us please contact Matthew Cooper.

Andy Anderson



THE HARVEST HYMN by John Betjeman

*We spray the fields and scatter
The poison on the ground
So that no wicked wild flowers
Upon our farm be found.
We like whatever helps us
To line our purse with pence;
The twenty-four-hour broiler-
house and neat electric fence.
All concrete sheds around us
And Jaguars in the yard,
The telly lounge and deep-freeze
Are ours from working hard.*

WE PLOUGH THE FIELDS - Updated for Schools

*We plough the fields with tractors,
with drills we sow the land;
but growth is still
the wondrous gift
Of God's almighty hand.
We use our fertilisers
To help the growing grain;
But for its full fruition,
It needs God's sun and rain.*

We Plough the Fields and Scatter was written by Matthias Claudius in German, based on Psalm 144, published in 1782 and translated into English by Jane Montgomery Campbell in 1861. She taught the hymn to the children at the parish school in London where her father was the rector.

It appears in a shortened form in the musical Godspell, as the song All Good Gifts.

Poet John Betjeman parodied the hymn as 'We spray the fields and scatter poison on the land' as a protest against modern farming methods and new planning legislation.

The updated verse 'We plough the fields with tractors' is sung in schools.



THE INJUSTICE ADVENT CALENDAR

I want to tell you about an advent calendar with a difference that I'm doing again this year. It's called the **Injustice Advent Calendar** and every day in December instead of opening chocolates you are sent an easy action from a different charity to help make the world a better place.

It's run by Transform Trade and some of the charities in this year's calendar include The Trussell Trust, Marine Conservation Society and MacMillan Cancer Support. The actions will always be free, and take less than five minutes – so you can start your December mornings by doing a good deed without even leaving the house.

Want to do it too? Sign up at **<https://www.transform-trade.org/injustice-advent-calendar>**

Bev

There was an interruption to the Metro service at Bank Foot!



"At least I've parked between the lines Officer!"

GARDENING FOR DECEMBER/JANUARY

First of all may I wish all readers the “Compliments of the Season”. May you continue to enjoy life in your outdoor space whenever conditions are favourable. 2022 has been, I suppose, quite a memorable year – for some the warmest year overall, for others quite a difficult year, particularly farmers. Climate is changing with an increase in persisting patterns as well as ex-



trems but still temperate. Climate change may mean plants may suffer from new pests and diseases. An example is leek moth – not new but with a more favourable environment to thrive in. Longer dry spells have meant much more watering for me

stimulating slugs and snails and blight. I have often linked weather patterns to the moon: the expectation of late frosts in the spring, rain when new and full. My memory suggests more notable changes in 2021 several moons (later frost destroyed apple blossom in more susceptible areas like ours in 2021) then perhaps less pronounced in 2022 when we didn't get any rain when we wanted it. Continuing the weather theme we had two gardeners in for a full afternoon on 14th April. They weeded and cultivated most of the main vegetable beds. They planted all the potatoes and put the chicken net up for supporting the mange-tout peas I had growing in pots. All the plantings into these undisturbed beds were successful. Brussels sprouts and savoy cabbage planted into areas I managed to cultivate have been very disappointing despite watering.

It is the time of year to record the successes in the garden (mentally or onto paper) and to start to plan what to grow where in 2023. You may have in place lots of spring bulbs, biennials (eg wallflowers) and perennials in the ground and like us, many in planters. Which perennials should be divided and best sections (outside) should be replanted and which destroyed? Then you come to considering something new. It is time to check through the retained seed packets and see which might be considered for sowing in 2023 if those are plants you wish to grow again. Seed packaging has improved and if you have resealed the spare seeds in, the information on the packet may be adequate for retention (or destroy). If you are not very sure you can test by placing 4 -5 seeds on moist kitchen roll, sealing in a polythene bag and placing somewhere warm and watching daily. Some new varieties of seeds have become so expensive that

nurseries germinating them have seed cabinets so that they can achieve maximum germination before planting the small seedlings into growing compost. I have saved seeds of mange-tout, broad, French and runner beans which I have dried and these will be kept in an envelope in a dark cabinet in the garage.

There are plenty so I won't need to test.

Reading gardening publications you will see commentaries on new varieties of both vegetable and flowers and will be able to choose what you might like to try. It would often seem that a



number of vegetables with good flavour, high yield and resistant to common problems are now coloured.

Black tomatoes, purple cauliflowers, purple runner beans - some may retain their colour at cooking.

Margaret likes red tomatoes, white cauliflowers, green runner beans etc. so I am reluctant to try new

recommended coloured produce. When it comes to flowers there is a need to decide what you would like, and consider how you might obtain them. Some will be so scarce in the early years they are only obtainable as expensive, potted plants. Others will be available as plugs, although expensive can be grown on to be planted out for your pleasure. There are many varieties of the commoner bedding plants that can be bought at nurseries and Garden Centres ready for hardening off and planting out. Whatever you choose to grow, if it is something that is not going to be freely available do your research, and if it is to be from seed, plugs or plants coming from a more exclusive source, get your orders in early. Producers can run out of stocks and will send substitutes unless you tell them not to. By 2025 gardeners are going to be deprived of composts containing peat which has been the backbone of success in the increased interest in gardening. However if you are going to grow in planters there are very sustainable John Innes planting mediums (seed sowing, No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3). These are based on sterilized clay containing added feed and other items suitable for seed sowing up to small shrubs.

Finally, think of indoor Christmas plants – Poinsettia, Christmas cactus, Kalanchoe, Hyacinths and Cyclamen.

HAPPY NEW YEAR, 2023.

Syd Cowan

COFFEE SHOP STROLLERS

This newly formed group has enjoyed outings to Saltwell Park, Kirkharle, Blyth, Newburn, Whitley Bay, Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, and Morpeth. We aim to start the strolls again in March 2023 but will meet in Dobbies one Saturday morning in late January/February.

Jennifer Hardy

TINY TEDDY BEARS RAISE FUNDING FOR UKRAINE



An advert on TV caught my attention stating that £27.00 provides a tent shelter for one family. So I would like to thank all those who bought the bears – and to date approx £30 has been raised. They are knitted from old scraps of wool and the stuffing is a toy non-allergenic one which is washable. Winter has set in now in the Ukraine and -7°C seems an average daytime temperature. I'm aware that the sum raised is not huge but "every little helps" and the exercise has kept this dreadful war and tragic suffering as a needy cause in the front of our minds.

Jean Tweedie

VILLAGE NEWS

Ponteland Rugby and Football Club—Plans for Club House

An appeal has been made against the decision to refuse the request to fell 15 trees.

Parliamentary constituency boundary changes

This issue has been under consideration for a while. The plans could result in parliamentary seats in the north east reducing from 29 to 27. The object is to rebalance the number of electors each MP represents. The latest plan proposes bringing Callerton and Throckley into the Hexham constituency.

New Lighting

New swan-necked lights have been installed on Main Street.

Jennifer Hardy

COST OF LIVING SUPPORT

The government is providing direct support via Energy Bill Discounts. For those pensioners who normally receive £200 winter fuel payments an additional £300 is being added for winter 2022 only.

Households on means-tested benefits may be eligible for additional support. Northumberland CC is aiming to provide advice and support (tel 01670 620015) 9am-6pm seven days a week or NCT@Northumberland.gov.uk. They also provide advice to families regarding free school meals, child benefit, maternity costs, healthy-start vouchers and child care.

Jennifer Hardy

FAMILY NEWS

Our best wishes go to church friends who have recently moved, and for those who are about to do so.

Best wishes to several friends who have had recent successful eye surgery. **Colin Hunter** is progressing well following his cataract operation.

Other friends are awaiting treatment, and in some cases, surgery. They also need our prayers.

Hello everyone

This is a special message from me to say I have been overwhelmed with the wonderful kind, caring thoughts, and beautiful cards I have received since my unfortunate incident in hospital, from which I am improving.

I am Now Looking Forward to all the Christmas events and meeting you all again.

Every good wish for Christmas and 2023

To all a merry Xmas and a happy new year

Many blessings

Ann Scott

The Last Taboo? Talking about dying

Where? Ponteland Methodist Church

When? Saturday 28th January 2023

What time? 10am to 1pm

Bring your lunch and stay and chat together.

Who is it for? Anyone who wants to talk more openly about dying, death and a meaningful end to life

How to book your place? - email

Ballantyne@methodistchurch.org.uk or register at

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/456949216407>

Preachers December

4th 9.00am Bouncy Church
6.30pm Coulthard
11th 10.00am Lanyon
6.30pm Sewell (S)
18th 10.00am Brooks (S)
6.30pm Forrester
25th 10.00am Sewell
6.30 No Service

Preachers January

1st 10.00am Woolley
6.30pm No Service
8th 9.00am Bouncy Church
6.30pm Orrock
15th 10.00am Davies
6.30pm Woolley (S)
22nd 10.00am Small
6.30pm Sewell
29th 10.00am Sewell (Cov S)
6.30pm Sewell (WPCR)

Ponteland Methodist Church

Christmas Carols

Thursday 22nd December

7.00pm



All are Welcome

Refreshments from 6.15pm



From The Editors

Don't forget that copy for the February edition of *Cornerstone* should be with the editor by **Friday 27th January 2023**. The editor's email address is andrew73anderson@gmail.com. The editorial committee is Andy Anderson, Jennifer Hardy, Jona Sewell and Viv Whyte.