

Encouraging YOU to know JESUS

*Love was born at Christmas,
star and angels gave the sign.*

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

Reflection "The Emotions of Christmas"

Bible reading Luke 2: 8 – 16 Authorised Version

To recognise that Jesus, whose birth we celebrate is the One who can meet all our needs, and satisfy the longing of our souls, that too, brings great joy.

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them: and they were sore afraid. 10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. 12 And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying. 14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. 15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let us go now even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. 16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

I am sure you would agree that Christmas is an emotional time of year.

First of all, there is the sense of wonder.

Luke attempts to describe the emotions of Christmas that came bubbling to the surface in the characters of that very first Christmas Day. Luke paints a picture of a baby being born, angels filling the heavens and shepherds, in stunned amazement, listening to the heavenly chorus.

At verse 18 we are told, "*And all they that heard it **wondered** at those things which were told them by the shepherds.*" Their wonder should be no surprise, because their silent night had been filled with the glorious presence of God.

As adults, all too often we lose our sense of wonder. Over the years, when we have seen children taking part in the Nativity, we have seen their faces filled with a real sense of wonder.

Sadly, we have become so accustomed to the Christmas story, that we are dulled to its amazing message, its incredible message.

The second emotion of Christmas is joy.

Often, we sing the hymn, "*Joy to the world, the Lord has come.*" How vividly that hymn expresses our emotions at Christmastime. I do not mean the hollow smiles that some people put on, especially this

year with the pandemic, or the artificial happiness produced by alcohol, but the **joy** that is rooted in a living personal relationship with Jesus.

Mary felt joy over Jesus. Throughout her life was a deep sense of joy that came from the awareness of the part God was allowing her to play in the redemption of the world.

The angels felt joy over Jesus. *"We bring you good tidings of great joy,"* they said. It was good news because the One whose birth they announced was to be the Saviour of the world.

And, when we realise the significance of what happened that night so long ago, we too should feel joy. To recognise that God loves us enough to become what we are, so that we can become what he is, brings us great joy.

Another emotion of Christmas is sadness.

This is not a contradiction about the good news of joy, but a recognition of the fact, that in the midst of all the joy, there are those Christians who find Christmas a depressing time.

Psychologists say that for many people Christmas is the most depressing time of the year. Sometimes the sadness comes from the demands of the season.

Most often the sadness of Christmastime is the awareness that the future will never be like the past. Those who have to face Christmas without a loved one whom they lost during the year obviously experience real sadness among the celebrations.

Some of this sadness is inevitable. The demands of the season are depressing at times. Facing Christmas alone does hurt, so some sense of sadness is inevitable.

But the discovery of the true meaning of Christmas will help to dispel much of it. For Christmas means hope, fulfilment and peace.

Hope comes not from a denial of death, but from the realisation that not even death can separate us from those we love in Jesus Christ.

Fulfilment comes not from everything we enjoy at our Christmas dinner, but from the one who is *"The Bread of Life."*

Peace comes because we are not living according to the world's standards, but as the people of God.

The fourth emotion of Christmas is love.

In Matthew's Gospel, we hear of the visit of the wise men bearing gifts for the new-born King. At no other season of the year do we feel warmer towards others, are more kind in our relationships, more sympathetic towards each other's needs, and more expressive in our **love**, than at Christmastime.

By his very nature, God is love, and he loves each and every one of us. God answered our greatest need, when he showed us his love.

We are inclined to think that our deepest needs are food, clothes and shelter. It is true that we need all of these things, but our deepest need is love – and the way that we experience that love is through relationships.

There is a story of a father who had two small children, and they used to plead with them every night, just before they went to sleep, to tell them the story of *"The Three Bears."*

The father said to himself, *"This is ridiculous. I'll record the story, so that they can listen to it themselves."*

The next day he made the recording and after showing the children how to work the tape recorder, he left them and settled down to read the evening newspaper.

Soon, however, the children appeared and climbed on to his lap. One of them said, *"We liked hearing your voice on the tape recorder, but we missed you holding us in your arms. Please tell us the story again, and this time, hold us tight."*

At Christmas, it is as if God puts his arms round us, and holds us tight. God knew that we would reject him when he came to the cross, but he still held out his arms.
And today, although so many people have no time for God in their lives, he still holds out his arms. So many people have lost respect for God, **but he still comes** – even to those who reject him.

So, we experience different emotions at Christmas – wonder, joy and sadness, but the greatest of the emotions, the one which all of us need above everything else, is **love**.

May God bless each one of you with his love this Christmas.

Amen.

Rona



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 Irene Montgomerie (in Ayr Hospital)
Mrs Anne McDonald	Mrs Jean Allardyce
Mrs May Wilkinson	Mrs Gina McKnight
Mrs Catherine MacDonald	Mrs Heather McLeod
Mrs Anna Irving	Mrs Isabel Calder
Mrs Betty McPherson	Mrs Rena Bell

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 sheenahunter@hotmail.com

NB. Public worship Due to the Scottish Government placing South Ayrshire in Level 4 again from Boxing Day, please note that there will be **no worship in the hall** on Sundays **27th December** and **3rd and 10th January**. You will receive notification of when we may restart via e-mail or telephone once it is clear what will happen thereafter.

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.

Birthdays Our wishes for a very Happy Birthday go to each of the following this week:-

24th December Eleanor Lunn and Gary McCleary

25th December Christine Gemmell

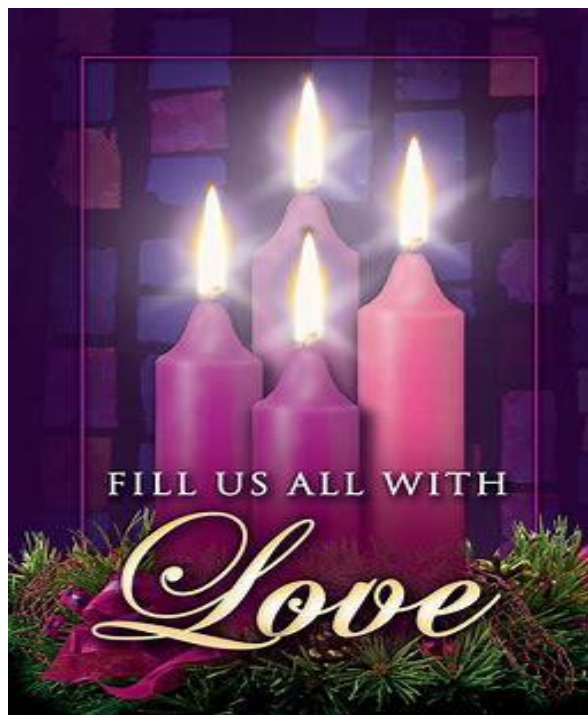


Salvation Army Food Bank Please note that donations can once again be brought to the halls' vestibule in the church drive between **2.00pm** and **3.00pm each Sunday afternoon** even when the church is closed due to Level 4 restrictions. Sincere thanks go to all who bring donations and to those who collect 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.

Please watch 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 Gary McCleary and next week by Pauline Johnston 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.



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