



# Soundings

Portobello & Joppa Parish  
Church Magazine

December 2020  
& January 2021

# *Portobello and Joppa Parish Church*

## From the editor



In his letter this month, Stewart muses on the wisdom of grandparents and (sometimes) the old ways. This made me think about my grandparents – all, at one time, members of St Philip’s – and their sayings. My Granny Campbell was a lovely person with never a bad word for anyone, and I remember her telling me, “Never say *I can’t*; always say *I’ll try*”. Who knows what I might have achieved if I’d followed this advice? Grandpa Campbell used to dish out more practical instructions, such as, “Never put anything smaller than a barge pole in your ear.” The other grandfather died before I was born, but I remember Granny Smith saying, “It’s a funny wee world”. She wasn’t wrong. I must think up some wise words for our grandchildren to remember in years to come.



Many of us haven’t seen one another in person recently, but our ministry team and others are still working away at least partly behind the scenes. (Think of swans, paddling frantically under the water.) We’re reminded about accessing worship either digitally or in person; we hear from Celia about what the Pastoral Group is doing; again you’re invited to buy Christmas cards for good causes; and there are the usual features, in one of which we meet Sue and find out what she might have had as a career (brrr). There’s still time, Sue. Michelle tells us (some of) what she’s been doing, and Esther asks us to support CREATIVenergie, a Portobello-based charity giving light and energy to people in Africa.

With the good news of vaccines which seem to give immunity against Covid, I hope that by the time the February edition of *Soundings* comes along we may all have a spring in our step as well as (possibly) antibodies in our systems. Meanwhile, best wishes for an unusual but happy Christmas and a blessed New Year.



**Pam**



## ***From the minister***

Dear Friends and Neighbours, A farmer is driving his tractor through the fields of northern England, ploughing and preparing. His grandson is sitting behind him. The farmer sees something white, small and indistinct in the ground and stops his tractor. He lumbers down, carefully cups the whiteness in his hands and sets it to the side. The grandson is bemused, perplexed and maybe a bit impatient. A few rows later, he stops the tractor, descends again and replaces the white objects back where he picked them up.

The mother soon returns to tend the eggs in her nest, kept safe by the sharp and kind eye of a traditional farmer.

A story from James Rebanks in his recent book 'English Pastoral'. It is in many ways an elegy to a way of life that didn't just disappear by chance, but also through decisions about the way farms should be run and pressures of modernisation.

James was not interested in farming: too many clashes with his father. But he was informally taught by his grandfather and learned many of the skills of the old way of farming. Rebanks, not surprisingly, begins to wonder about the value of this approach, rejects it and then, eventually, begins to see the rich value in a close, caring proximity to the land.

The old ways are not necessarily always the best ways. There is, however, a depth of experience, insight and wisdom that is dismissed or jettisoned at our peril.

The analogies with faith are clear. Time does move on and the world changes. Yet some things can and should remain. Patient tending of flock and field; steadfast courage and hope in the face of challenges; a close, wondrous connection with the world around us; and the humility to learn and listen.

In many ways, James was apprenticed to his grandfather. His grandfather was a mentor to him. From grumbling that he had to wake up at 5.30am to work, James eventually was ready and eager. It was his way of life, it was his farm, it was him.

Passing on the wisdom of the ages requires a cognisance of the modern world. It too requires a willingness to involve, encourage and teach through example the virtues and values that have stood the test of time.

Passing on the faith to children and grandchildren is no less difficult and, perhaps now more important than ever, more crucial and vital.

How have we, as parent or grandparent, aunt or uncle, friend or neighbour, planted the seed of faith? How have we lovingly tended, nurtured and cared? How have we remained steadfast even when the winds of modernity and time have blown a gale?

For James' grandfather, it was a task of quiet joy, commitment and determination. It was who he was. Passing on his identity to James so James could know who he was.

What riches we have inherited. What riches the family of nations need right now.

Who have you nurtured? Who can you nurture now?

## **Stewart**

*Apologies – this lovely photo of Kerr (who's on placement with us at the moment) after his wedding to Moira should have illustrated Kerr's "Getting to know you" feature last month. In case you don't know what they look like – it's this.*



## ***Worship***

We will continue to provide worship at 10am on Sundays at the church, as well as an 11am Zoom service.



If you would like to book a seat for a 10am Sunday service (we unfortunately must limit our seating), please contact the church office on 657-3401 by 12 noon on the preceding Friday.

Bookings for 10am can also be made online. The link for doing this changes each week but is updated weekly on our website, at [www.portyjoppachurch.org](http://www.portyjoppachurch.org)

Please do book ahead in order to ensure that we can accommodate people safely. If you discover you cannot attend, please do contact us: [office@portyjoppachurch.org](mailto:office@portyjoppachurch.org) or [sweaver@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:sweaver@churchofscotland.org.uk).



Should you wish to take part in the Zoom service at 11am, please do check the e-newsletters on Fridays. If you don't get the e-newsletter, please contact Stewart at

[sweaver@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:sweaver@churchofscotland.org.uk).

Many thanks and hope to see you soon.

**Stewart**



### ***Sunday 10 am services by telephone.***

Phone access to the service is also possible. Phone the office on 0131 657 3401 for details of how do this.



## ***Christmas wishes for our tea party guests***

Due to the current restrictions, once again, with great regret, we have to postpone the twice-yearly Afternoon Service and Tea Party for the elderly and vulnerable members of our church family; for some, it is the only occasion that they are able to attend a service in the sanctuary.

This is so disappointing, not only for our guests, but for all of us on the Ministry, Transport, Entertainment and Tea Teams. The guests, many of whom are brought to the church by volunteer drivers, enjoy a short, intimate service conducted by Stewart, then have a delicious afternoon tea, followed by musical entertainment. It is such a happy occasion, with lots of laughter, chat and reminiscences; the time just flies! The occasion is hugely enjoyed by all, guests and helpers alike.

As it is nearing Christmas and we all need something to uplift us after months of restrictions, we came up with the idea of delivering Christmas cards and little gifts to each guest. These will be delivered at the beginning of December.

I'd like to thank all those who have been involved in any way in the planning and those who have volunteered to deliver the gifts. It will be hugely appreciated and will give Christmas cheer, not only to our guests, but to all who are participating in this venture.

**Celia**

Pastoral Convenor



## **PJPC TLC**



During the past months of lockdown, restrictions, yet more restrictions and all the anxiety about the future that these bring, it is increasingly apparent that many people, not just the elderly, are becoming depressed, more vulnerable, over-anxious and showing mental and physical problems; as a result, it is very possibly the case that more of our members are in need of friendly contact.

It is our duty of care that we are aware of our friends' and neighbours' difficulties at any time, and especially now with these extremely trying, uncertain and seemingly never-ending restriction to our "normality". As the Christmas season approaches, none of us will be enjoying our usual period of festivities, either at home or with our friends at church. Let us all look out for those who are especially sad or who will miss the companionship of friends or family at this or any other time.

If anyone has concerns about the welfare of a member of our church family or in the wider orbit of the church, please do let us know and we can take it from there.

People to contact: Stewart ([sweaver@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:sweaver@churchofscotland.org.uk))  
Lourens ([ldejager@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:ldejager@churchofscotland.org.uk))  
Celia ([celiafoley41@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:celiafoley41@yahoo.co.uk))

Remember - we are all one family, all connected. Let's look out for each other.

**Celia**

Pastoral Convenor

## ***Videos and Photos from Thought for the Day: An Archive of a Community Pulling Together!***



In April and May, members of the congregation pulled together to keep each other connected and engaged.

Many people offered videos of music, poetry readings and photographs to keep our spirits up and our souls intact.

It was such a terrific outpouring of energy and care that we decided to capture all of this on a memory stick.

SO, if you'd like a collection of the videos and photos produced in those first weeks and months of lockdown, please do let us know at the e-mails or phone number below. We can then think about the best way to get them to you.

The memory sticks will also be made available to pick up during the Sunday 10am services.

In response, you'd be more than welcome to make a 'wee donation' to the church via the website! Or a little something by cheque sent to the church office (1 Brunstane Rd. North EH15 2DL) wouldn't go amiss either!

Thanks. Enjoy.

**Stewart**

[office@portyjoppachurch.org.uk](mailto:office@portyjoppachurch.org.uk)

0131-657-3401 (church office)

***Gardening with George*** - More plant lore from George Anderson, horticulturist and star of the small screen.



My time on the student course at The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (1966-69) covered a period of great change at The Garden. Many of the old glasshouses were in a poor state and needed extensive repair so a decision was taken to demolish the old glass and replace it with a new state of the art glasshouse, the Front Range. It was unique in many respects. One of the most remarkable features of the new glasshouse was that it had no internal supports: the whole of the roof was suspended below a set of hollow steel beams which were in turn counterbalanced by a series of external tetrahedrons. The whole roof was suspended on a series of steel wires and glazed with panes of glass much larger than anything previously used. The result was a glasshouse with better light and more uninterrupted planting space for plants. I was lucky enough to be involved with much of the planting in the fern house and centre house and once the glasshouses opened to the public I was responsible for the care and maintenance of the tropical aquatic house and the fernery. It was an exciting time.

The season of Advent and Christmas will soon be upon us and holly and Ivy will be cut and used to decorate our houses in some way or other. The tradition in the Anderson household when I was a boy was for berried sprigs of holly to be cut and set above the various pictures on the living room walls. If we felt a bit enterprising, there would also be holly cut and draped over the old grandfather clock that sat, ticking quietly, in the corner of the room. Holly is thought by some to be one of the plants used to form the crown of thorns, with its berries the drops of His blood. The ivy with its clinging habit is a reminder that we need to ‘cling to Christ’ and follow his example throughout our lives. The parasitic plant, mistletoe, with its green leaves and sticky white berries, has appeared in winter ceremonies since the time of the Druids and at Christmas. It was a plant of great mystery, growing as it does on the branches of certain other trees. The white berries are eaten by visiting birds. The juice of the berries is incredibly sticky and

when the birds try to clean their beaks by wiping them on tree branches, some of the small seeds are deposited in the cracks and crevices of the tree's bark. The seed germinates and the mistletoe roots grow down into the host tree, tap into its vascular system and gain much-needed sustenance. It is also seen as a symbol of fertility. Take care who you kiss under the mistletoe.

In ancient times branches from the bay tree, *laurus nobilis*, were woven into leafy wreaths and used to honour winning athletes or adorn the head of the various Caesars. The leaves of the bay tree are seen as a symbol of the victory of good over evil, God's victory over the devil.

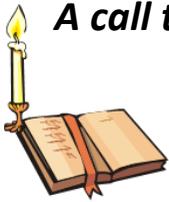
One of the most popular pot plants at Christmas is the poinsettia, with its bright red floral bracts and green leaves. A native of Mexico, it is a semi-tropical plant which belongs to the euphorbia family. Legend has it that Pepita, a poor Mexican girl, was on her way to the Christmas Eve service but had no present for the baby Jesus. She was upset and her cousin, in an attempt to cheer her up, said that he was certain that even the smallest gift given by somebody who really loved Jesus would make Him happy. So, she picked a small bouquet of wild flowers from the roadside and laid them at the altar. The bunch of wild flowers miraculously burst forth and became a bouquet of bright red flowers. From that day on, the bright red flowers of the poinsettia have been known as the 'Flowers of the Holy Night' and every Christmas tens of thousands are raised and sold.

Whether it is poinsettia, holly, ivy, mistletoe, laurel or a small bunch made up of flowers from the garden, have a Happy Christmas.

Stay safe and keep gardening

**George**





## ***A call to prayer***

### ***Lord, what should I do?***

*“Along unfamiliar paths will I guide them”, Isaiah 42, 16*

Are you feeling uncertain or afraid as to God’s will in your situation? His promise to you is: “I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them”.

When you’ve sought God’s guidance through the Scriptures, when you’ve tried to listen to the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit, and when you’ve reached for the wisdom of trustworthy people, then you must step out in faith and do what you believe God is calling you to do.

It’s one thing to ask, “Lord, what should I do?” It’s another to ask yourself if you’re willing to do it. For most of us, risk and change are uncomfortable, challenging and even threatening. That’s why the Bible says, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.” (Proverbs 3, 5)

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## ***Brain-teaser***



### **Christmas around the world.**

These facts are from the Blue Peter website. Their accuracy isn't guaranteed (the answer to the question – “what do many British people do on Christmas Day?” is that they swim in the sea. Hmm, maybe not *very* many).

1. In Norway, people hide their brooms on Christmas Eve. Is this:

- a) To stop evil spirits stealing them?
- b) Because no one cleans at Christmas?

2. In Caracas, Venezuela, people go to church on Christmas Eve:

- a) by horse and cart
- b) on roller skates

3. In Ukraine, there is one Christmas ornament everyone has on their tree. What is that ornament?

- a) a chocolate boot
- b) a spider's web

4. In Estonia, where will a lot of families traditionally go on Christmas Eve?

- a) up a hill
- b) to the sauna

5. In Mexico, one town celebrates a special festival on the 23rd December where they make sculptures out of a vegetable. Which vegetable is it?

- a) potato
- b) radish

(Answers on next page)

## Answers to the Christmas quiz:

Answers: 1a, 2b, 3b, 4b, 5a.  
1. Norwegians used to believe that evil spirits and witches stole brooms on Christmas Eve to ride around on them. 2. A poor Ukrainian woman couldn't afford to decorate her tree but woke to find that a spider had woven a beautiful web all over it. 3. No one knows why this is a tradition in Caracas, but the authorities close the roads to make roller skating safer. 4. They do this on New Year's Eve and Midsummer's Eve too in Estonia. 5. This is called El Festival de las Rabanos in Mexico.

## ***Advent Bags***

Thanks to everyone who knitted small sheep for us this year. They are safely on their journey to 80 different homes in the parish and surrounding areas. Our volunteers have delivered Advent At Home Bags for families in crèche, Sunday Stars, Messy Church, Breakfast Club, Coffee Break and from our baptismal roll.



The delivery area stretched across Edinburgh with several bags also going to East Lothian, two to Midlothian and one to West Lothian (this one by post given the current tier system). We are truly a gathered church community these days. The delivery of Advent At Home supplies to church family who live outwith Portobello and Joppa parish was perhaps even more appreciated as church came to them at a distance when usually these families would drive the distance to be at our church.

The wee sheep in each bag accompanied Advent candles and readings, a dinner candle to decorate and burn through Advent, a Christmas decoration to create, some ideas for activities and prayers, some candy canes, a sticker Advent calendar for the younger children and some other treats and craft supplies. Our volunteers brought them to the door and then stood back to a safe distance to

have a conversation and catch up in the garden. It has been a great opportunity to re-connect with PJPC families near and far. We pray that the bags will be a blessing for the families and a way to celebrate Advent at home this December.



**Michelle**

## ***Darkness & light***

*Last autumn, Joel talked to our congregation about the charity for which he works, CREATIVenergie, which provides sustainable energy for people in Africa. Here his wife, Esther, tells us more about this and asks for our contributions.*



A year ago I sat in the rocking chair breastfeeding my baby, whilst my three year old walked across the hall to fetch something from her bedroom. It was late afternoon and suddenly all the lights went off in our flat and in every building down the street. Even the street lights went off. Unexpectedly we found ourselves in complete darkness. I have experienced power cuts before, and for much longer periods in Ghana, but never have I experienced such pitch black darkness in residential Edinburgh. For my three-year-old it was slightly terrifying, suddenly separated from me and unable to see anything. Yet now it's just a memory of an unusual, but brief, power cut. She occasionally asks 'Mummy, remember when all the lights went off?'

In Malawi, 14.9 million people still have no access to electricity. That's almost three times the entire population of Scotland! In fact only 10% of Malawi's rural population currently have some form of electricity access, which is not necessarily reliable. Lack of electricity results in extreme darkness when the sun goes down, meaning there is no light to study or work after dark, no cold chain

for vaccines nor power for medical devices. I wonder if my daughter could comprehend that some children her age encounter such darkness every single day, when the sun goes down until it rises again the next morning? Could they imagine that for my daughter such darkness was brief and is just a distant memory?

### ***Light for Life***

CREATIVenergie, a Portobello based charity, is passionately committed to unlocking sustainable energy for abundant life. We have collaboratively developed the *Solar Light Exchange*, a solar charging hub from which people can rent and recharge portable battery packs to power lights or charge mobile phones. The solar power can also be used for other appliances, e.g. to aid agriculture and business. We are grateful to PJPC for supporting *Light for Life* last Christmas. This year we are partnering with Scottish Charities *Love Ghana* and *The Kerusso Trust* to set up *Solar Light Exchanges* in Ghana's Volta Region and the Blantyre Region of Malawi.

As we enter the Christmas season, we celebrate Jesus' birth, remembering that "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5 NIV). Could you partner with us so that communities in Malawi and Ghana can experience the transformational impact of *Light for Life* leading to a more abundant life this coming year and in the years to come?

### **How to give...**

From 1st December to 8th December 2020, donations to CREATIVenergie can be doubled if given via *The Big Give Christmas Challenge*. That's one donation, twice the impact! If you would like to support our *Light for Life* projects, please donate via <https://bit.ly/givelight4life> There is a short video on the donation page explaining more about *Light for Life*.

Alternatively, you can set up a one-off or regular donation anytime via [www.give.net/creativenergie](http://www.give.net/creativenergie) (full Gift Aid terms are available through the link).

We will be happy to provide a 'gift card' for you to pass on to friends and family if you choose to make a donation instead of purchasing a gift for them this Christmas.



**Find out more...**

If you would like to sign up to receive our news or prayer points emails please contact Joel and Esther Chaney via [info@creativenergie.co.uk](mailto:info@creativenergie.co.uk)

You can find out more stats on electricity access via <https://trackingsdg7.esmap.org/>

Scottish Charity No. SC047910 [www.creativenergie.co.uk](http://www.creativenergie.co.uk)

*The photo shows the testing of the first solar light exchange kit in Ghana in 2019. Photo credit: Love Ghana, 2019*



**Getting to know you – Sue.** Sue is in Discernment to explore her calling to the ministry. She says:

Hello everyone! I am so pleased to have joined PJPC now that I have moved back to Edinburgh and found a home-base here by the sea. I have long been rather a ‘church commuter’, attending services wherever I have laid my hat. I moved away from Edinburgh 20 years ago to work in London, then in Wales and Gloucestershire so for a long time, could only make it to a Kirk service on trips north....how good it would have been to have access to the rich offering of online worship that we are now seeing!



I’ve had quite a varied career which started in the arts and auction world and one of the highlights was being part of the project to build the Museum of Scotland. I then worked down South in law enforcement and intelligence before moving into higher education management. I am now the Director of Academic Services at the University of Edinburgh.

**Q. What is a favourite hymn, and why?**

A. There is a green hill far away. *This is a hymn whose words and tune are ingrained into my memory having been a regular favourite at primary school assembly! Originally written for children, it’s a perfect and simple portrayal of the truth about the sacrifice made for us in Jesus.*

**Q. What is an early church memory?**

A. *Just like Kerr said in the last edition, it is really about school assemblies. We lined up every day with our hymn books and we listened to stories about Jesus, sang the famous tunes and worked on our special events like Nativity plays and Easter. It was a natural part of growing up and the rhythm of these days and years was quite comforting.*

**Q. What's your earliest *childhood* memory?**

A. *Being lifted up, aged 2, by my dad to see into the maternity ward when I went to visit my new brother for the first time. The occasion had probably been built up as a 'big thing' but I can only recall the door and the window, not the baby!*

**Q. In an alternative life, what job would you have chosen?**

A. *Skipper of an Antarctic research vessel.*

**Q. What are you reading at the moment?**

A. *I usually have a couple of contrasting things on the go and at the time of writing they are 'Jesus, A Very Brief History' by Prof. Helen Bond and 'The Secret South, A Tale of Operation Tabarin, 1943-46' by Ivan MacKenzie Lamb.*

**Q. How did you find lockdown?**

A. *Loved it and hated it... I really loved the quiet, the peaceful days and the ability to go for a cycle with no traffic. But as things never stopped for me at work, it has been somewhat relentless to be at the home-desk on the PC all day since March. I am not seeing my parents as they live on the south coast of England.*

**Q. What is your most prized possession?**

A. *Not really a possession, but I suppose I could say my dog is my favourite toy!*

**Q. Tell us something that not many people know about you.**

A. *I did a round-the-world yacht race.*

**Q. What luxury would you take to a desert island?**

A. *A boat. (The editor isn't sure about this. You can only have it if you don't use it to escape. Rules are rules.)*

**Q. What do you do to relax?**

A. *I go rowing, either on the River Tay or on the sea, although sometimes it is rather too active to be called relaxation. If I really want to 'veg', I watch as many box-sets of crime, thrillers or 'Scandi-drama' as I can find.*

**Q. What is a favourite quotation?**

A. *"Sometimes things fall apart so that better things can fall together" — Marilyn Monroe*

**Q. What kind of music do you listen to?**

A. *I really love film music (John Barry/Hans Zimmer et al) and a range of classical as well as the '80s pop of my youth! I quite like having Scala Radio on in the kitchen.*

**Q. How would you like to be remembered?**

A. *As someone who did a load of stuff and had the insight and compassion to put experience to good use to help other people.*

**Q. What gets you up in the morning (apart from your alarm clock)?**

A. *The dog.*



## ***Old Spectacles***

Sadly, the Vision Aid Overseas charity is no longer accepting old spectacles to recycle.

It has become non-cost-effective, and the Coronavirus crisis has hastened the closure of the appeal. Thank you to all who have donated their unwanted spectacles over the years.

**Angela**

# CROSSREACH

Care you can put your faith in

## ***News from CrossReach: Winter Appeal 2020***

In 2020 CrossReach launched an urgent appeal for funding to enable us to continue providing enhanced care services to some of the most vulnerable individuals across Scotland during this unprecedented healthcare emergency. The response was amazing and humbling, as the appeal drew in over £275,000 to keep our services open and our staff and clients connected and protected. Thank you!

With winter, demand for CrossReach's services increases; the need for care, counselling, special education, and practical measures to support the most vulnerable in our community are all exacerbated by Covid-19. That is why we are asking for continued support in our Winter Appeal. Are you able to help CrossReach again at this most crucial time through either a one-off, or a regular donation?

Your donation(s) can help provide:

- essential supplies to keep service users and staff connected and protected
- telephone counselling for people who find their mental health is suffering at this time
- ongoing loving care across all our services, including learning disabilities, homelessness, addiction recovery and children's services

Please, help as you are able. Thank you!

## Internet Banking

If you are sending CrossReach a donation via internet banking, you will be asked the name of the account you are transferring the money to, which is CROSSREACH DIR DON

Call us on 0131 454 4374 for full information on donating by Internet Banking.

## Make your donations to CrossReach worth 25% more

When a UK tax payer gives to charity, it's from income they've usually already been taxed on. CrossReach can reclaim the tax you paid on your donation, increasing the value of your donation to us by 25%. So for every £10 you donate, CrossReach can receive an extra £2.50 through Gift Aid, at no extra cost to you. To make this to happen, please complete the Gift Aid Declaration on our Giving Forms and return it to us.

Make your donation worth an extra 25p in each £1.

Contact us for more information: email [info@crossreach.org.uk](mailto:info@crossreach.org.uk) or by phone.

Thank you.

“Christmas is doing a little something extra for someone.”

— **Charles M. Schulz**



“Christmas is not a time nor a season, but a state of mind. To cherish peace and goodwill, to be plenteous in mercy, is to have the real spirit of Christmas.”

— **Calvin Coolidge**

## ***Cards and calendars for St Columba's***

As many will remember, Ian has for many years been selling Christmas cards and calendars for St Columba's Hospice at coffee time after church.



Sadly this year, because of the present circumstances, he isn't going to be able to do this.

However, the cards and calendars are available *now* at the St Columba's shop at 195 Portobello High Street, and it would be much appreciated if you could still support the charity by buying them at the shop instead.

**CROSSREACH**

Care you can put your faith in

## ***CrossReach Christmas cards***

As well as the cards and calendars at the St Columba's shop in Portobello, you can also look at the selection available from CrossReach, the social work arm of the Church of Scotland. View their selection on [www.shop.crossreach.org.uk](http://www.shop.crossreach.org.uk) or phone 0131 454 4374 for a paper catalogue.

## ***Remembering***

8 Nov.

Bob Tollervey of Joppa



## **LIFE AND WORK DECEMBER 2020**



**A Covid Christmas** The challenges of marking Christmas 2020, by ministers and chaplains

**Today, Tomorrow and for Eternity** The Moderator of the General Assembly explains why the message of the Christ Child is not just for Christmas

**Christmas Can't Be Stolen** The Very Rev Dr John Chalmers reflects on the message at the heart of a children's Christmas tale, amid the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on this year's celebration

**Unlocking the Magnificat** Ruth Harvey considers the message of Luke 1: 46-55

**From Stevenston to Shorthand** How a knack for shorthand took church member John Dawson on a journey across the world

**Assembly Business** Further reports from the General Assembly in October

**Personal Faith and Politics** In this month's youth column, politics student Sophia Johnston reflects on how her faith has shaped her world view

### **Online**

Visit [www.lifeandwork.org](http://www.lifeandwork.org) for news and exclusive features, including Coronavirus Diaries from Church of Scotland mission partners across the world. You can also find us at [facebook.com/lifeandwork](https://facebook.com/lifeandwork) or on Twitter [@cofslifeandwork](https://twitter.com/cofslifeandwork)

**Subscribe** online from £6 for three issues (special offer for new readers, from December 1), or download a digital copy for £1.99; return the form in the magazine or speak to your church's Life and Work co-ordinator. Gift subscriptions are also available.

## ***MAGAZINE/DIARY DEADLINES***

February 2021

March 2021

April 2021

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2021

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2021

***Scottish Charity Number : SCO11728***



[www.portyjoppachurch.org](http://www.portyjoppachurch.org)

Photography by Anne Russell