

HALO

ST COLUMBA'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, TARADALE

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From the Minister

The election is over and so now we get to see whether the promises the politicians made will be kept. Sometimes factors that stop someone keeping their promises are external factors like the world economy but we all know sometimes keeping the promises is harder than making them. The great theme of Christmas is that God has kept his promises – he has sent us a saviour. However I do notice one of the key readings for this week is 2Peter 3:8-9 “...with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. So the Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you.” where Peter is giving reassurance that though the promise Jesus made to come again and restore universal peace and justice seems slow in coming it is certain to happen.

People of the Old Testament times would certainly have agreed that God is sometimes slow to keep his promises. There are huge gaps of time between the earliest promises of a Messiah and Jesus' actual birth and ministry.

It is this sense of promises fulfilled that gives shape to church services throughout December as we read from Isaiah chapters 9,11,40 or Micah 5 etc. The hope of a Messiah was well entrenched in Jewish thinking based on readings from Genesis 3, Deut 18, right through to Malachi (the last book in the Old Testament). The big questions were not if but where, and when and who and what would be the signs to indicate that God was at work to fulfil this promise.

So when you hear of stars in the sky being an omen to wise men, or angels appearing to shepherds or young women, these are all signs that God is doing a new thing and fulfilling his promises. But still the nature of that fulfilment is uncertain. Those nearest Jesus would know of the strange events that occurred at the time of his conception and birth but in many ways these are just a hint to what was still to come. There were then another 30 years before Jesus actually stood up to teach or performed a miracle or to demonstrate that the potential hinted at in his birth was real. Even during his ministry so much of his life was visible only to those who encountered him on the road or to the few who joined his inner circle.

The poem - One Solitary Life - starts like this

Nearly two thousand years ago in an obscure village, a child was born of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village where He worked as a carpenter until He was thirty. Then for three years He became an itinerant preacher....

... three days later this Man arose from the dead, living proof that He was, as He had claimed, the Saviour whom God had sent, the Incarnate Son of God....

This one Man's life has furnished the theme for more songs, books, poems and paintings than any other person or event in history. ...All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the governments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned have not changed the course of history as much as this One Solitary Life.

In one sense saying we believe in Jesus is also a promise. It is saying we believe he shows us the Love, Wisdom and Power of God (he is God made flesh) – so we promise to learn from him and become like him in loving and we allow ourselves to be transformed by his power. This is how Jesus can have so much influence in the world – because we choose to be like him and open ourselves to him. So this Christmas as we celebrate that God has kept his promise by sending a Messiah may we also keep our promise to learn from his wisdom, to share his love, and to demonstrate his power.

May you all have a blessed and merry Christmas, *Brett*

Reading and Prayer

Reading: "The angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord'." **Luke 2:10-11**



Prayer: Our Father in Heaven, may we know the presence and peace of Jesus Christ this Christmas; and show love to all those we come in contact with this season. Amen.

Session Report for Halo - 2011

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On behalf of Session, I pray you have a blessed Christmas with your loved ones and a safe holiday if you are travelling.

For some of you, Christmas will be a difficult time, a lonely time, the first Christmas without your loved one, or perhaps your family is overseas. If you are feeling any of these emotions and need prayer or company, your Elder is only a phone call away. It is a privilege to be able assist in any way and we pray that you will have the courage to pick up the phone and call.

Session has been working hard to try to improve the communication with the congregation. If you have questions you want answered but not the courage to ask there is an 'Issue of Concern' leaflet in the pigeon holes out side Brett's office. Fill it out and leave it in the Session Clerk's pigeonhole and we will endeavour to deal with your concern.

Session members are looking forward to a break from meetings but we are available to you, at any time. Robin and Pam will be here in Napier over the Christmas period.

It is exciting to end the year with the Ordination of two new Elders, Jean Fink and Jim Payton. This has swelled the number of men Elders to seven and the women to five - we are now twelve. We are so blessed to have them on Session and we pray that God will give them wisdom and grace as they serve Him as their Lord and Saviour, and you, the congregation.

Let us all focus on the Christ child this Christmas, remembering He is the only reason for the season.

May God Bless you and keep you, surrounding you with His love and grace.

Pam Thrupp

Session Clerk

Board of Managers' Report

The Board of Managers report that progress is being made on some major expenditure items that are concerning them this year.

Firstly, many thanks to the wonderful response to Robin Arnold's request for funds to improve the screen and projector. Everyone agrees that the improvement is massive.

Secondly, the holes and the surface of the carpark are being investigated and we expect some early improvement on the current rough surface.

Thirdly, tradesmen are again inspecting the roof, which has leaked intermittently for many years, and we are hopeful of an early solution.

Fourthly, we are most grateful to the large number of ladies and men who attended the recent Working Bee in the church and the Manse - many thanks for doing a fine job.

Mainly Music

Mainly Music (MM) is an outreach programme run on church premises throughout New Zealand and Australia and extending to other countries. You will often see comment from Margaret and Karen, our MM leaders, in Halo.

Mainly Music is a programme designed to provide a safe environment for parents, caregivers and preschool children to mix socially, and for the children to interact with music, songs, stories and play in a Christian setting. Morning tea is also provided.

If you are ever near St Columba's at 9.30 a.m. on a Wednesday or Thursday please feel free to drop in to Fish Hall. Karen and Margaret won't hurt you but you may be hooked and feel an overwhelming urge to assist, or join in the dances and actions.

Margaret and Karen thank all the St Columba's helpers and supporters and wish you an enjoyable Christmas and holiday time.



What Are Presents?

It was nearly 11 o'clock on Christmas Eve. Janet and her Mum and Dad had just parked their car in the carpark and were heading up the steps into the church. Janet was nine years old and she had always gone to Church with her Mum and Dad on Christmas Eve. It meant that she was a bit tired on Christmas morning, but the thought of presents got her out of bed easily.

Janet's Church was quite a big flash one. There were many steps up to the front doors. As she climbed the steps, she saw a movement in the corner where the steps met the wall of the church. She looked closer, and saw a boy about her age sitting with his back against the wall. She let go of her Mum's hand and told her that she would be back in a moment.

Janet went to the boy. She was dressed in her best clothes but the boy had on dirty jeans, sneakers with holes, a torn jersey, a beanie, and a jacket that looked like it would never have kept the cold snow out.

'Hello,' said Janet. 'What's your name?'

'Adam,' said the boy.

'My name is Janet. This is my Church. Do you go to my Church?'

'I don't go to no silly Church,' said Adam.

'Well why are you here then?' asked Janet.

'Because,' said Adam.

'Because why?' asked Janet.

'Just because,' said Adam.

'Where are your Mum and Dad?' asked Janet.

'Don't have no Dad and Mum is sick,' said Adam.

'Are you cold?' asked Janet.

'Perhaps,' said Adam.

'Come inside out of the snow,' invited Janet. She took Adam by the hand and they climbed the steps to the front door. There were coloured lights hanging from the windows and around the door.

'What are the lights for?' asked Adam.

'They are Christmas lights,' explained Janet.

'What's Christmas?' asked Adam.

'Don't you know silly?' asked Janet.

'Course I do,' replied Adam. 'I was just testing you.' Janet gave Adam a bit of a funny look. 'What's that?' Adam continued, pointing to a manger scene with a baby Jesus doll in a manger and Mary, Joseph and animals gathered around.

'You don't know what Christmas is do you,' stated Janet. 'How old are you not to know about Christmas?'

'Doesn't matter,' said Adam. 'I don't want Christmas anyway.' He let go of Janet's hand and turned back towards the door. Janet grabbed his hand again.

'No don't go away,' said Janet. 'If you don't know what Christmas is, I will tell you. Do you know who Jesus is?'

'Course I do,' said Adam. Janet looked doubtfully at him. 'Maybe I forgot,' he added.

'A long, long time ago,' explained Janet. 'In a place called Bethlehem, which is in Israel, two people, Mary and Joseph had a baby. It was a miracle baby made by God.'

'You have heard of God haven't you?'

'Course I have,' said Adam. 'He lives in Heaven and has got a long beard. He helps people, but he has never helped my Mum. I don't know why he doesn't help her. She has asked lots of people for help, but she can't have found him yet. Do you know where heaven is?'

'Yes, I think so,' said Janet thoughtfully. 'I will try and tell you after I have told you about Christmas.'

'Well, when Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, all the hotels were full. There was nowhere for them to stay, and the baby was due to be born. The best they could get was

was a shed attached to a hotel. That is where Jesus was born. When he was born, Mary put him in a thing that held hay for the animals. It was called a manger. There wasn't a proper bed or anything.

'So those animals, dolls and things are to remind us what it was like when Jesus was born. Jesus is God's son. God is Jesus' father.'

'I knew that,' said Adam. 'You were going to tell me what Christmas is though.'

'Well I have,' said Janet. 'Christmas is Jesus' birthday. You do know what a birthday is don't you?'

'Yeah, course I do,' said Adam. 'How old is this Jesus today?'

'About 2,011 years old.'

'You are silly,' said Adam. 'Nobody can be that old. That is older than those people sitting in there.' Adam pointed to the people sitting in the Church. 'It is older than my Mum.'

'Well I told you it was a long, long time ago,' said Janet.

'Is Jesus in there with those people?' asked Adam.

'Yes and no,' said Janet. 'Some people killed him and he has gone to Heaven to be with God.'

'Oh,' said Adam. 'Why is every one happy in there singing then? When my uncle died, my Mum cried. She was sad, she wasn't happy.'

'We are happy because it is Jesus' birthday and Jesus was God's present to us. He was a very special present.'

'Sometimes Mum says I am special to her,' said Adam. 'So that is Christmas. It is a birthday.'

'Yes,' said Janet. 'It is Jesus' birthday and because it is we give presents to each other so we remember God's present to us.'

'What is a present?' asked Adam.

'It is a surprise wrapped up in paper so you don't know what it is until you open it,' explained Janet.

'I have never had a present,' said Adam. 'Where do I go to get one?'

'My Mum will have one,' said Janet. 'Come with me.' Janet grabbed hold of Adam's hand and they walked into the Church. They went to Janet's Mum and Dad and sat down beside them. 'This is Adam,' whispered Janet. 'He doesn't know what a present is. His Mum doesn't know either. I said you will give him a present.'

'Of course I will,' Janet's Mum whispered back. 'As soon as it is Christmas day I will do that.'

So, Adam sat in Church with Janet and her parents until the service finished just after midnight, which meant it was Christmas Day. Janet's Mum talked with the Minister and some other people in the Church. There was a lot of talking, and people going here and there. Adam just sat with Janet. It was nice and warm so he was happy.

'So young Adam,' said Janet's Dad. 'Which street do you live in?'

'I don't know the name,' said Adam. 'I can show you though.'

'Is there only you and your Mum, or do you have brothers and sisters?' asked the Minister.

'There's just me and Mum,' said Adam.

'Okay,' said Janet's Dad. 'You come with us and we'll take you home.'

'Do I get a present?' asked Adam.

'Yes of course you do,' said Janet's Dad. 'And later on we will get a present for your Mum as well.'

Adam was taken home to his Mum. He was given some new warm clothes and some lollies as presents. His Mum was given a food parcel, and some clothes, and both Adam, and his Mum, went to Janet's home for a Christmas meal.

The next Sunday, Adam and his Mum went to Church with Janet and her parents. As they sat in Church Adam turned to Janet and said,

'You don't have to tell me where Heaven is now. Mum says we have found it.'

Beauty for Ashes

On Friday 4th November, Massive Youth hosted the Tear Fund's Beauty for Ashes tour at St Columba's. The tour was to highlight child sponsorship in developing and third world countries. Beauty for Ashes refers to Isaiah 61: 3 KJV.

While there were only five adult members of St Columba's present, three of them had previously sponsored children; Massive Youth added 20 – 25 to that number. Halo discovered that Massive Youth are exceptionally well-behaved and excellent ambassadors for our Church.

St Columba and Massive's very own Petra, singing three songs, provided warm-up. What a talented young woman. Petra was followed by Luke Pilkinton (note the spelling) the son of Missionary parents, who spent some of his childhood on the fringes of a Manila slum. Many of his songs are based on his experiences in Manila as a child and his subsequent mission work in Africa. You can download some of Luke's music for a Koha from www.lukepilkinton.com.

Michelle Tolentino, who escaped from a Philippine slum, followed Luke. That particular slum is one of the biggest in Manila. Her family consisted of Mum, Dad, herself and two brothers. Her Dad was unable to get a job. They were often extremely hungry. Some days they would have one egg to share between them and their 17 relatives living with them. When Michelle was eight years old, her Dad left them. He was a drug addict and because of that, he would steal from others to obtain funds to buy his drugs. His family would be blamed and share the shame. Her auntie Carole took her to a Church and said she should register to be a sponsored child. Auntie Carole was the only Christian Michelle knew, at that stage, but her own Mum eventually accepted the Lord. She was given a big red Bible and it became the most important thing in her life. It was also the first time in her life that she had ever been hugged. The Church arranged for her to attend school. She was the thirty-seventh child in the child sponsorship photographs, and despaired of being chosen by anyone for sponsorship. The Lord was with her though, and an American family from Connecticut sponsored her; a family she later met and spent considerable time with and got to know. They exchanged regular letters, and when the sponsors sent her a photograph of them all in the snow, she found it unbelievable as she thought they had purchased snow and dumped it in their yard. That same family later helped to sponsor Michelle through University in America where she obtained a Masters degree in Communication Arts. Her story was extremely moving, although with a happy ending. Without the sponsorship, Michelle would have been doomed to either drug addiction or prostitution.

In 2007, Michelle was contacted by an American Church to share her story. She told her story and was then told the Church had a surprise for her. She did not have a clue what that was to be, but it turned out to be that her sponsors were in the congregation.

Tear Fund played a video that featured four sponsored children, including Michelle, and they shared how much child sponsorship had helped them. Of those four children, teenagers had sponsored three.

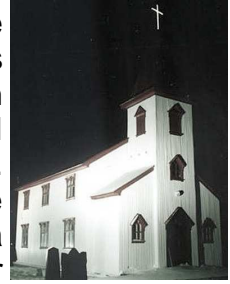
Massive Youth have agreed to sponsor a child named Randy from Peru. We look forward to hearing progress reports.

Should you wish to sponsor a child, talk with Mark or Jeni Seek, or Brett will point you in the right direction, or you could go to www.tearfund.org.nz.



Christmas in Iceland

Christmas in Iceland is very traditional. The traditions go well back to the Viking age and are closely connected with St. Þorlákur's day, which is December 23rd, when they celebrate Þorláksmessa. St. Þorlákur, 12th century bishop and patron saint of Iceland, was canonized by John-Paul II as late as in 1985. On St. Þorlákur's day it is a tradition to serve the skate. The reason is that December 23rd was the last day of fast and people were not expected to have meat this day. Skate is a very smelly fish with a strong flavour, so not everyone, except us Icelanders, dare to taste it. After the skate is cooked we boil smoked lamb. That is the traditional food for Christmas day and the skate smell goes away and what we call the "Christmas smell" comes.



Christmas in Iceland is taken very seriously: it is not actually just one day of celebration, but a period of 26 days. Christmas season begins December 12th, when the first Santa Claus (Yulelad, (in Icelandic: jólasveinn)) comes. They are 13 and come from the mountains one by one each day before Christmas. It would be a big mistake to think of them in terms of a group of kind-hearted Santa Clauses. Quite on the contrary, they are pranksters who delight in tormenting Icelandic farmers (their names witness to the kinds of practical jokes they indulge in). From December 12th until Christmas Eve children put a shoe on the window in order to receive a gift or candy from them. To be sure, naughty children receive a potato instead.

The 24th is our biggest Christmas celebration. The official holiday does not start until at noon so all shops and companies are open until then. At 6 p.m. church bells are broadcasted through the radio and they are said to be ringing in the Christmas. At that time most families sit down at the dinner table and start their Christmas celebration.

My Christmas is similar, filled with traditions. On the evening at the 23rd I decorate the Christmas tree. My sisters tried to do it last year but somehow it didn't work so I had to do it all over again. What they will do now is going to be interesting since I will be spending Christmas here in New Zealand!

My family wakes up early on the 24th and we all go to the swimming pool around 7a.m. so everyone have had their Christmas bath. After that my mom and I go to her work since it is open till noon. I normally finish the last Christmas shopping for the evening and help my mum at work because she gives the other employers the day off. Then we start making dinner. At 6 p.m. my mom, my sisters and I go to church. My dad has to feed our sheep so he can't come. After church we go to the cemetery and light a candle at my grandparents' and my sister's grave and around 7:30 we go home. Between 8 p.m. and 9 p.m. we sit down to have the Christmas dinner. For starters we have a tomato soup with newly baked bread and eggs. Then we have smoked pork, mashed potatoes, waldorf salad and a special gravy my mum makes. By that time my sisters are getting tired of waiting for the presents so we take a break and open the presents. That normally takes many hours so after about two hours of opening presents we have the dessert which is an ice-cream my mum makes with a Scandinavian caramel chocolate called Daim. After the presents have been opened we sometimes skype our family that are staying in Reykjavik or my uncle that usually spends Christmas in Rio de Janeiro. Then we talk, play cards or read the books we got for Christmas. The main thing is to be together. On Christmas day the family relaxes. We go out to play in the snow, maybe go on a skidoo or go skiing. Sometimes even fishing through the ice on the lake by our house. In the evening we have family gatherings were we eat the smoked lamb that was boiled on the 23rd. The 26th is also a holiday were the family and friends meet and spend time together.



Our Christmas is called the holiday of light and peace. The celebration does not end until the 6th of January and by that time the last Yule Lad goes up to the mountains were they live. That day families visit one another and serve great feasts. It is also believed that this day elves celebrate together with humans so we have huge fires were we dance and sing old traditional dances. Gleðileg Jól! Asta

8 **Christian World Service**

An envelope for donations towards the CWS Christmas Appeal is included with this issue of Halo.



CWS is the international development, justice and aid agency of New Zealand Churches. It has been doing a world of good for 66 years. This 66th appeal focuses on 'good development' and in particular on the Global Food Crisis. Even today, a child dies every 5 seconds of hunger related causes. Extreme natural disasters, war, conflict and mass migration, and land grabs in undeveloped nations continue to trap people in poverty.

This appeal is to provide real and practical solutions to hunger; teaching and resourcing people to fish, establishing livestock farms of pigs, cows, goats or chickens for income and food, safe reliable water sources and providing seeds to help people grow their own daily bread.

Please support this appeal if you are able.

Christians Against Poverty

You will recall Simon Wilce, the Operations Director of CAP NZ speaking in Church during November. Simon offered to swap a book titled 'Nevertheless' by John Kirkby in return for the congregation completing a form with their details upon it.

Halo complied, and received a copy of the book.

On the cover of the book, it states 'The incredible story of one man's mission to change thousands of people's lives.' The story of faith recorded in the book is reminiscent of the faith story featured in 'The Cross and the Switchblade'

John Kirkby had worked in the finance industry for a number of years and stepped out in faith to commence a charity he called Christians Against Poverty (CAP). From his initial beginning, alone and with ten pound in his pocket, helping a handful of people in financial trouble, he founded an organisation that now helps 20,000 people a year get out of debt. CAP is situated in Britain, Australia and New Zealand and now expanding across the world. It costs millions of dollars to run the charity but it is still run dependant upon donations and grants. It has no direct Government funding.

The Faith part of the story comes from a belief in going where God wanted Kirkby to go. A group of trustees who generally shared the vision ran CAP. Often it would involve stepping out in total faith that God would provide. In many cases, CAP advisors were being trained when there was no money to either pay them their wages, or indeed, pay rent on any premises for them to set up in. In some cases, things did not work out as predicted, but overall they did, which is witnessed by the current organisation. The trustees and Kirkby could see what others could not see. They had a vision they believed was provided by God and they followed it faithfully.

To step out in faith to fulfil a vision is not for everyone. That is a pity, as we have a God who says he will never forget us nor forsake us.

St Columba's, via Brett, is running CAP courses for those who need help with their finances and to prepare and keep to a budget. The system does work. It is similar to that used by secular organisations but CAP is always partnered with a Church. That ensures that support is available. It has always also resulted in people being lead to the Lord. If the debts accrued by a person are literally overwhelming, then CAP Money Advisors will negotiate with creditors to reorganize repayments at a manageable level.

Need more information? Brett's the man.

Want to read the book? Jim's copy is in the Church library in Fish Hall.

Amahl and the Night Visitors by Gian Carlo Menotti will be performed in the church here at St Columba's on Wednesday 21st December. If you love musical theatre performed at the highest standard, make sure you bring yourself and your friends along to this glorious Four's Company production! Tickets will be available from the church office and are only \$15 per person and we are offering a **free \$5 supper ticket** to the first 50 people who purchase their tickets. The story tells of the night the Three Kings, following the star to Bethlehem, stop for shelter at the home of Amahl, a poor crippled shepherd boy who lives with his widowed mother. Inspired by the Three Kings tale of a kingdom "built on love alone", Amahl offers his own simple gift to the Christ Child.



"...prepare to meet your God..." (Amos 4:12)

We are in a season of preparation. With Christmas right ahead, our preparations sometimes become hectic, even frantic, as we race to complete all that we believe we must do to enjoy the season.

That's sad, isn't it? All the cooking, cleaning, baking, decorating, shopping, wrapping, list making - it's exhausting! And as much as we may enjoy the results, the busyness of it all can sap our strength and steal our joy, robbing us of the true meaning of the season.

But, there is something even sadder in all this, and that's the fact that we readily and willingly invest so much time preparing to celebrate these lovely holidays while neglecting to prepare for the most important event of our lives - meeting with God.

This is true of both our regular, daily meetings with God, as well as the one face-to-face meeting we will all experience with our Creator upon our death. Of course, for those of us who have received Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, we have not only already had that first meeting by being introduced to God's only Son, but we have also established an ongoing relationship with Him by inviting His Spirit to live within us. Therefore, there need be no fear of that meeting after death. Yet even those of us who have the joy and privilege of knowing beyond a shadow of a doubt that God's Spirit dwells within our heart can still lose sight of the need to prepare to meet with Him. As a result, we neglect the ongoing cultivation of what should be a vital and growing relationship with God and allow our faith to grow cold and joyless.

Give yourself a present this season, will you? Take time to prepare to meet with God - and then do it. Regardless of how busy your life may be, purposefully interrupt that impossible schedule and rest in His presence, absorb His strength, and revel in His love. Then pass that gift on to someone else who has yet to take the time to prepare to meet God. It is the most important meeting of our lives - and therefore the most important preparations we ever make. Yes, we want our houses decorated for the season and the packages wrapped for the holidays - but those preparations should always take a back seat to preparing to meet with our God.

Shalom to you all in this wonderful season of preparation!

***Kathi Macias** is a wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother - as well as an "occasional radio host" and an award-winning author of more than thirty books, including her popular international Extreme Devotion fiction series from New Hope Publishers.*

View From Under the Pew By Church Mouse

Honestly, I just don't know what to make of youngsters these days. I went away for a few days last month and left the writing of this little monthly missive in the hands of my teenage son. I had actually written it out for him and all he had to do was m-mail it to the Church office but even that was too much apparently. We don't have e-mail, only m-mail (mouse mail). Sorry about that!

I am really enjoying myself at the moment. With Christmas coming up there are many meals being had in Fish Hall and the crumbs provide a bit of sustenance for an O.A.M (Old Aged Mouse). I don't usually like accepting charity but if you can't get it at a Church where can you get it?

Maybe if I listen in on those Christians Against Poverty classes on a Thursday evening I'll learn a thing or two and be able to support the family and save enough to take a holiday in a bakery somewhere.

Merry Christmas you lot.

'Twas the Beginning of Advent

'Twas the beginning of Advent and all through the Church
Our hope was all dying - we'd given up on the search.
It wasn't so much that Christ wasn't invited,
But after 2,000 plus years we were no longer excited.

Oh, we knew what was coming-- no doubt about that.
And that was the trouble-- it was all "old hat."
November brought the first of an unending series of pains
With carefully orchestrated advertising campaigns.

There were gadgets and dolls and all sorts of toys.
Enough to seduce even the most devout girls and boys.
Unfortunately, it seemed, no one was completely exempt
From this seasonal virus that did all of us tempt.

The priests and prophets and certainly the kings
Were all so consumed with the desire for "things!"
It was rare, if at all, that you'd hear of the reason
For the origin of this whole holy-day season.

A baby, it seems, once had been born
In the mid-east somewhere on that first holy-day morn.
But what does that mean for folks like us,
Who've lost ourselves in the hoopla and fuss?

Can we re-learn the art of wondering and waiting,
Of hoping and praying, and anticipating?
Can we let go of all the things and the stuff?
Can we open our hands and our hearts long enough?

Can we open our eyes and open our ears?
Can we find him again after all of these years?
Will this year be different from all the rest?
Will we be able to offer him all of our best?

So many questions, unanswered thus far,
As wisemen seeking the home of the star.
Where do we begin-- how do we start
To make for the child a place in our heart?

Perhaps we begin by letting go
Of our limits on hope, and of the stuff that we know.
Let go of the shopping, of the chaos and fuss,
Let go of the searching, let Christmas find us.

We open our hearts, our hands and our eyes,
To see the king coming in our own neighbours' cries.
We look without seeking what we think we've earned,
But rather we're looking for relationships spurned.

With him he brings wholeness and newness of life
For brother and sister, for husband and wife.
The Christ-child comes not by our skill,
But rather he comes by his own Father's will.

We can't make him come with parties and bright trees,
But only by getting down on our knees.
He'll come if we wait amidst our affliction,
Coming in spite of, not by our restriction.

His coming will happen-- of this there's no doubt.
The question is whether we'll be in or out.
"Behold, I stand at the door and knock."
Do you have the courage to peer through the lock?

A basket on your porch, a child in your reach.
A baby to love, to feed and to teach.
He'll grow in wisdom as God's only Son.
How far will we follow this radical one?

He'll lead us to challenge the way that things are.
He'll lead us to follow a single bright star.
But that will come later if we're still around.
The question for now: Is the child to be found?

Can we block out commercials, the hype and the malls?
Can we find solitude in our holy halls?
Can we keep alert, keep hope, stay awake?
Can we receive the child for ours and God's sake?

From on high with the caroling host as he sees us,
He yearns to read on our lips the prayer: Come Lord Jesus!

As Advent begins all these questions make plea.
The only true answer: We will see, we will see.



Thank You and Merry Christmas

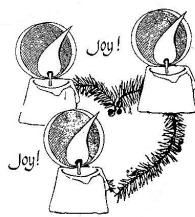
The Communications Committee thanks all those who have contributed articles and items for Halo's consideration during the past year. For various reasons not all can be published, but we do our best. Thank you for your support. Please continue to do so. A big thank you to those who receive Halo and provide much appreciated feed back. Please do not be shy to praise or criticize. As one of St Columba's means of communication with you, Halo needs you to keep us apprised of what you wish to see included in it.



Merry Christmas, and please remember the reason for the Season. God Bless you and keep you safe during the festive season.

Kool Kids Christmas message

Kool Kids wish everyone a very happy Christmas and a New Year full of God's richest blessings. Thank you for the way you have supported all the children and made them feel such a part of this wonderful Church Family. It is so wonderful to see how the children have gained confidence with their readings and in taking part in the family services. After the Family Service on 27th November, the children decided to donate a goat and two chickens to the Tear Fund, gift for life. We will use the money that would normally be used to buy them gifts from the food (Christmas) which a child will otherwise receive. This is a lovely way for the children to learn how to give to those less fortunate than themselves and to feel how good that feels.



May God Bless you all, from the Kool Kids and their leaders

What's on in December/January

Sunday 11 th December	9.30 a.m.	Children's Christmas Service
Thursday 15 th December	1.45 p.m.	Missionary Guild
Sunday 18 th December	9.30 a.m.	Special Music Service
Wednesday 21 st December	7.30 p.m.	Amahl and the Night Visitors
Saturday 24 th December	11.15 p.m.	Carols by Candlelight
Sunday 25 th December	9.30 a.m.	Christmas Day Service
Wednesday 18 th January	7.30 a.m.	Board of Managers monthly meeting in the lounge
Thursday 26 th January	7.30 p.m.	Session meeting
Tuesday 31 st January	7.30 p.m.	Women's Evening Fellowship

Regular events

Mondays	House Group 7.00 p.m. (fortnightly) Contact: Pat Gordon 844 2188
Tuesdays	Op Shop open 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Contact: Cynthia Duncan 845 3539*
	Prayer Group 11.00 a.m. - 11.30 a.m. Contact: Marjory Yelverton 843 5331
	House Group 7.30 - 9 p.m. Contact: Bob Wallis 844 5630
	House Group 7.30 - 9 p.m. Contact: Robin Arnold 844 7808
	Women's Fellowship meets on the fourth Tuesday of the month
Wednesdays	Mainly Music 9.30 a.m. - 10.30 a.m. Contact: Margaret de la Haye 843 2272
	Op Shop open 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Contact: Cynthia Duncan 845 3539*
	Youth - 'Pimp My Ride' 7 p.m. - 9 p.m. Contact: Mark Seek 027 478 9404
	Board of Managers meet at 7.30 p.m. in the church lounge on the third Wednesday
Thursdays	Mainly Music 9.30 a.m. - 10.30 a.m. Contact: Karen Jensen 843 9447
	Op Shop open 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Contact: Cynthia Duncan 845 3539*
	Missionary Guild meets on the third Thursday of the month
	Session meet at 7.30 p.m. in the church lounge on the fourth Thursday
Fridays	Youth - 'Contact' 7 p.m. - 9 p.m. Contact: Mark Seek 027 478 9404

*The **OP SHOP** closes on Thursday 15th December and reopens on Tuesday 10th January 2012.

Church Office Phone and Fax 844-5004 Monday—Friday 9.30am—12.00pm
 If no reply, please leave a message and we will call you back as soon as we can.

Church Postal Address:	P O Box 7136, Taradale	
Minister	Rev Brett WALKER	844-2256
Session Clerk	Pam THRUPP	835-5785
Parish Assistant—Youth	Mark SEEK	027 478 9404
Pastoral Care	Robin ARNOLD	844-7808
Communication	Dot McLEOD	844-1211
Af Care/Holiday Programme	Peter WOOTEN (coordinator)	843-7770
Change of Address	Church Office	844-5004
HALO - Editor	Jim Payton	843-3937
- Distribution	Wendy GOSLING	844-0282

Services – Sunday 9.30 am morning worship

Communion is celebrated on the first Sunday of March, August and December and the second Sunday of June, plus Easter and World Communion Day.



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