

Ferryhill Parish News

December 2007/January 2008

Maxi Edition for delivery by 2nd December

You may recall that last Christmas we asked you to buy some very special **Christian Aid Christmas Stars** to help decorate Christmas tree in church. With the money raised we hoped to buy a herd of goats to send from Ferryhill Church to local farmers in one of the world's poorest countries, where it could transform people's lives. The response was so generous that we were able to send **four** herds of goats as well as nine pigs, one cow, one ewe, one ram, sixteen ducks and one can of worms!!



This year we are repeating the scheme, but instead of animals we want to buy a **solar panel** to send to Malawi. Every year in Malawi, almost 100,000 children die before their fifth birthday. Most are killed by illnesses that could easily be prevented and cured with access to proper medical care. In isolated areas, solar energy is making all the difference. Just two solar panels can provide enough electricity from the sun's rays to power an entire health centre, bringing life-saving medical treatment and vaccines to as many as 30,000 people. A gift like this really does go on and on.

You will be able to buy stars before and after the services each Sunday in December and during the special Christmas services (see over for details). Stars cost 50p (or a donation). One solar panel costs £600, so we will have to sell a lot of stars to reach our target. Why not buy some for the church tree and some for your own Christmas tree? Or buy some for friends and family and spread the message of love for our neighbours at Christmas. Donations will also be welcome. Jackie Watson, our Christian Aid Convenor would love to hear from you (Tel: 696010). As we celebrate Christmas in our own homes surrounded by our friends and family with gifts, cards, good food and wine, these stars will remind us what Christmas is really all about, and what each of **us** really ought to be giving at Christmas.

SERVICES IN DECEMBER

Candles will be lit on the Advent ring on each of the four Sundays in Advent.

Sunday 2nd (1st in Advent)

11 a.m. Worship for all ages.
Sunday Gang and crèche.

Sunday 9th (2nd in Advent)

11 a.m. Worship for all ages.
Sunday Gang. Crèche.

Sunday 16th (3rd in Advent)

11 a.m. The Christmas Story for all ages. Sunday Gang and crèche.

Tuesday 18th

12.10 p.m. Mid-week service

Friday 21st

10.45 a.m. Ferryhill School Service

Sunday 23rd (4th in Advent)

11 a.m. Worship for all ages.
Christmas Interviews and Dialogues with music from the Ferryhill Singers. Crèche.

Christmas Eve (Monday 24th)

10 a.m. Make Christingles with coffee and mince pies.

All welcome!

6.30 p.m. Christingle Service for all ages.

11 p.m. Carols by candlelight
(*Please bring a torch to this service*)

11.30 p.m. Watchnight service
(*Please bring a torch to this service*)

Christmas Day (Tuesday 25th)

10 a.m. Worship for all ages
(Lasting approx. 35 minutes)
Please bring a Christmas present you have received.

Sunday 30th (First After Christmas)

11 a.m. Worship for all ages.
Carols and readings. Crèche.

Services in January 2008**Sunday 6th**

11 a.m. Worship for all ages.
Crèche.

Sunday 13th

11 a.m. Worship for all ages.
Sacrament of Holy Communion
Sunday Gang and crèche.

Tuesday 15th January

12.10 p.m. Mid-week service

Sunday 20th

11 a.m. Worship for all ages.
Sunday Gang and crèche.

6 p.m. Informal service with Holy Communion

Sunday 27th January

11 a.m. Worship for all ages.
Sunday Gang and crèche.

Services in Nursing Homes:

Devanha : 6 p.m. Sundays 9th December and 13th January

Mayfield East : 6 p.m. 23rd December and Sunday 27th January

Cowdray Club : 11 a.m.

Wednesdays 5th December and 2nd January 2007

Christmas offerings

The offerings from the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services will be divided between St John's Church for the Deaf (Aberdeen) and

Items for the Diary:

Congregational Board: Wednesday 12th December at 7.15 p.m.

Co-ordinating Committee: Thursday 10th January 2008 at 7.15 p.m.

Kirk Session: January 17th 2008 at 7.15 p.m.

Christmas Message

Christmas celebrates the event of God's nature entering the human experience of life in this world. In theological terms it is called the incarnation, God becoming human flesh or as John's Gospel most memorably and succinctly puts it 'The word became flesh and dwelt among us.' That same Gospel however says nothing about the circumstances in which this occurred. It is Matthew and Luke who give the less theological but more colourful stories of how God's nature was born into the world in the person of Jesus. It is these stories that we remember and retell at Christmas. Rather than giving tight theological discourses about the incarnation that we might find difficult to retain, they provide dramatic and mysterious stories set within geographical and historical contexts with characters, dialogue and happenings that are easily memorable and recountable. They actually tell two different stories. For example, Luke speaks about angels and shepherds while Matthew tells of a star and strange visitors from the east. (Read them for yourselves and see how they differ!) At the heart of the nativity narratives in both Matthew and Luke is, however, a simple fact: amid the struggle of a people who had longed for years to see God act in the world in new ways, God came to be with them in a way that totally identified himself with us, as human beings.

It was a risky thing to do, as indeed it proved to be as the earthly fate of Jesus shows. 'Love came down at Christmas' as we sing in one of the season's favourite carols. That is another way of expressing the incarnation; God's love entering this world in Jesus. That love, however, proved to be too challenging for some; it was too disturbing for those who headed a religion that had become legalistic and a burden to ordinary people and it was too threatening to those who exploited the poor and the marginalised. So it had to be got rid of. They thought they had done so in crucifying Jesus but he came back in a more powerful way that established a world wide movement called the Church – the body of Christ.

The Church still proclaims the incarnation and does so in the celebration of Christmas when it retells the ancient gospel stories. It is a message of hope and joy that the Church is happy to share with all and happy to invite all to share with it. It is above all a celebration that points us to the need so make God's love alive and active in today's world, a message especially for all those who feel burdened by religion or feel oppressed and marginalised by unjust and unfair human practices.

Have a Happy Christmas.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ian Dick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

A Farewell Note from the McEwens

Amazingly, our time with you in Ferryhill has come to an end. In so many ways it has simply whizzed by. Life seems to be in such a hurry these days and it seems like yesterday since we first appeared in the congregation last September. I have learned a great deal from you. I suppose that this learning is part of the plan of working within a training placement. But you have been kind, gracious and welcoming in a way that has gone far beyond expectations – one cannot ask for more.

At the moment, where we will be going is not yet settled. Progress could be described as slow but steady. As a family we are heading to New Zealand, over Christmas and New Year. We spent two periods each of five months in Christchurch around the year 2000 and so the chance to go back to see old friends and familiar places is too good to pass up.

The story of the Church is all about passing on what we have received to others. I have learned much from you and from being with you at Ferryhill. What happens now is that I carry that with me as I leave and I will then pass on what I have received from you to others. And so the story of Jesus Christ continues to be told to the glory of God. Thank you.

Ian, Edith, Peter, James, John & Tom McEwan

The **Aberdeen Chorus of Sweet Adelines** will be presenting their annual Christmas show "Shooting Stars" in the church on Monday 17th December at 7.45. An evening of fun, music and a few surprises suitable for all ages. Tickets cost £7.00 for adults and £5.00 for children and concessions. Refreshments are available.

City of Aberdeen Christmas Carol Concert, Saturday 22nd December 4-6 pm, David Welch Winter Gardens, Duthie Park, Aberdeen, with Bon Accord Silver Band. Contact: City Events Officer, Tel 01224 522000