



# SUNDAY 26<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2021

**SERVICES ARE AT 11 AM & 6 PM** (online & in-person).

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## WELCOME TO THE FREE NORTH CHURCH, BANK STREET, INVERNESS

Welcome, especially if you are with us for the first time or are taking time to explore the Christian faith. We wish you a very happy Christmas and all God's blessing in the coming year. We would love to help you to belong to the Christian family. We offer courses, small groups and resources to help. In our services we usually stand for our praise songs and sit for other items of worship. Refreshments are served in the church hall after both services. We follow all Scottish Government guidance to protect public health. Please use a face covering indoors, unless exempt, and avoid crowding or blocking exits. Visit and subscribe to our YouTube channel for live worship and to listen again at home: [www.youtube.com/c/FreeNorthChurchInverness](http://www.youtube.com/c/FreeNorthChurchInverness).

## CALL TO WORSHIP (FROM ISAIAH 25:9 [HCSB version] & LUKE 1:58 [NIV])

**Look, this is our God;  
we have waited for Him, and He has saved us.  
This is the Lord; we have waited for Him.  
Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation.  
Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,  
because he has come to his people and redeemed them.**

## PRAISE: SING PSALMS 24:1-8

**The world and all in it are God's,  
all peoples of the earth,  
For it was founded by the LORD  
upon the seas beneath.**

**Who may ascend the hill of God,  
or in his temple stand?  
The one who shuns false gods and lies,  
who's pure in heart and hand.**

**He will find favour from the LORD,  
and from his Saviour grace.**

**Thus are they blessed, O Jacob's God,  
who truly seek your face.**

**You ancient gates, lift up your heads;  
you doors, be opened wide—  
So may the King of glory come  
for ever to abide.**

**But who is this exalted King?  
What glorious King is he?  
It is the LORD of strength and might,  
the LORD of victory.**

*Words © 2003, Free Church of Scotland. CM.*

## PRAYER & LORD'S PRAYER

Today we pray for sister churches in **ST COLUMBA'S, EDINBURGH** (ministers, Revs Derek Lamont & Cory Brock) and at **NORTH TOLSTA** in Lewis (vacant, cared for by Rev Iain Thomson).

VIDEO – NOT JUST A BABY

## PRAISE: WHAT CHILD IS THIS

What Child is this, Who, laid to rest,  
On Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,  
While shepherds watch are keeping?

This, this is Christ the King,  
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:  
Haste, haste, to bring Him laud,  
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

Why lies He in such mean estate,  
Where ox and lamb are feeding?  
Good Christian, fear, for sinners here  
The silent Word is pleading.

Nails, spear shall pierce Him through,  
The cross he bore for me, for you.  
Hail, hail the Word made flesh,  
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh,  
Come peasant, king, to own Him.  
The King of kings salvation brings,  
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.

Raise, raise a song on high,  
The virgin sings her lullaby,  
Joy, joy for Christ is born,  
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

*Words - William Dix (1865). Tune: Greensleeves (16<sup>th</sup> Century). CCL License 616262. Streaming 324811.*

## BIBLE READING: LUKE 2:1-21

<sup>1</sup> In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. <sup>2</sup> (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup> And everyone went to their own town to register. <sup>4</sup> So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. <sup>5</sup> He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, <sup>7</sup> and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. <sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests." <sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." <sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. <sup>21</sup> On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

## TALK – LUKE 2:1-21 – THE REAL KING

Luke 2 presents a massive contrast between the kings and rulers of this world and the real King, the King of Kings, who was born in Bethlehem, to the virgin Mary. **1). THE REAL KING WAS POOR & HUMBLE.** Christmas is a tricky season for us to get right. We can easily focus on cute nostalgia, gift-giving, or sentimentality. But this season is about the poverty and humility that Jesus accepted, in order to give us the riches of God's eternal kingdom. Jesus' poverty should challenge and change our hearts. **2). THE REAL KING CAUSES GLORY & PRAISE.** The Good News of the first Christmas was not delivered to a palace, but to poor shepherds. Yet they soon caught on and delivered the angel's message of glory and praise to others. Jesus is still good news for the poor! **3). THE REAL KING BRINGS REAL PEACE.** Who gets Christmas peace from God? Not everyone! Because not everyone welcomes God's peace. But all those on whom God's favour comes to rest experience his peace. Will you welcome the gift of peace with God this Christmas?

## PRAISE: JOY TO THE WORLD

Joy to the world, the Lord has come!  
Let earth receive her King.  
Let every heart prepare him room,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing!

Joy to the earth, the Saviour reigns!  
Your sweetest songs employ,  
while fields and streams and hills and  
plains  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sin and sorrow grow  
nor thorns infest the ground:  
he comes to make his blessings flow  
where Eden's curse is found,  
where Eden's curse is found,  
wherever Eden's curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace  
and makes the nations prove  
the glories of his righteousness,  
the wonders of his love,  
the wonders of his love,  
the wonders, wonders of his love.

*Isaac Watts (1674-1748). Based on Psalm 98.*

## PRAYER & BENEDICTION

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**SUNDAY AT SIX – live in-person and on our YOUTUBE CHANNEL at 6 PM.  
LUKE'S ADVENT CALENDAR – THE REDEEMER'S PEOPLE - LUKE 2:22-40**

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## DIARY, NEWS & PRAYER

We wish you a happy Christmas and the care and kindness of our God in the year ahead. We thank everyone who has supported the mission of the Free North, and served our Christian family with their loving actions, prayers and the gift of their time, resources and talents during 2021. A special word of thanks to our office-bearers, staff and pastoral workers at the Free North and in the Merkinch Church Plant.

**Tea and coffee** are served in the hall after both our Sunday services. There is a holiday Sunday School during morning service.

**Public Health Advice: Guidance permits Church Services to continue as normal following sensible precautions.** We intend carry on with in-person worship as normal including our planned 11 am Service on New Year's Day. There is no need to book. Please do not attend if you are feeling unwell. There is greater space for social distancing on both sides downstairs and in the balcony area for those who would prefer that. The Scottish Government advise against social mixing of more than three households in domestic settings. Accordingly, we will avoid holding small groups in homes for the present. *Road to Recovery* has decided not to meet in person for now. The *Guys' Curry Night* is postponed and will take place when mixing of households for socialising is no longer discouraged. Any ladies going to *Coffee@Dobbies* on the first or third Tuesdays of the month will be mindful of the advice limiting contact to a maximum of three households, and find seating accordingly. We understand that some people will be uncertain about attending church meetings and events during this time. Others will feel a great need to be in fellowship with others and it is important that we respect and support each other over the coming months, whatever conclusions individuals come to about the challenges of Covid. Continue in prayer for God's daily help.

We will gather to begin 2022 in worship on **New Year's Day**, Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> January, at 11 am.

**FCYC Youth Camps are back for 2022!** For a holiday filled with fun activities, great friendships and helping to build strong disciples visit [freechurchyouthcamps.org](http://freechurchyouthcamps.org). Register by January 31<sup>st</sup> for the best chance to secure your first choice of camp.

We still have a few copies of the free “**LIFE-IS-MORE**” gospel calendars. Please take as many as you wish to use or give to friends. Browse the **bookstall** in the church hall. We have copies of **Explore Daily Reading Notes** (January to March 2022, £3) on the resource table in the church.

If you wish to subscribe to **The Record**, the magazine of the Free Church of Scotland, please contribute £24 for 2022. You can pay with an envelope in the offering with your name and marked for “*The Record*” (or pay via Paypal through our website with the reference “*Record*”).

#### EVENTS THIS WEEK

**Wednesday Church Night** at 7.30 pm. Prayer and Bible Teaching, in person and on YouTube.

**Friday Online Prayer:** A 30-minute Prayer Time on Zoom from 9 am, using the usual log on.

**New Year’s Day Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> January** – 11 am worship, followed by tea, coffee or a mulled drink in the church hall. Do welcome friends and family to join you in starting 2022 by turning towards our great and sovereign God.

#### PRAYER

Praise the Lord that Jesus came to be Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. Pray for teachers, pupils and families that the holiday time may be peaceful and joyful with time to gather and praise God together. Pray for any who are struggling within our church family at this time. Pray that they will be comforted, firstly by the Lord and then by his people as we seek to love each other as a church family. Pray for Chris and all in the Merkinch Church plant. Remember the Free Church congregation in Stirling, and the Bailey family, following the sudden death of their elder Clive Bailey last Tuesday.

#### PRAY FOR OUR MISSION PARTNERS IN 2022

Give thanks for our **International Mission to Jewish People** mission partner **Philip Amos**, who serves in North London and his colleague **Misha Vayshengolts** in Jaffa, Israel. Philip and Misha were able to visit us in 2021. Both have seen several people of Jewish background coming to faith in Jesus the Messiah in recent months. We also support **Patrick Jok**, a leader in the Reformed Church of Sudan in Juba, South Sudan, and our partner **Suresh Vemulapalli**, of India Village Ministries in Andhra Pradesh, a coastal region in South East India.

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

**New Year Week of Prayer:** As we enter 2022, and with God’s mission to our needy City in our hearts, we plan a special week of prayer from 10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> January.

**Hope Explored in early 2022:** These days hope feels hard to come by. The news bulletins can add to our levels of stress and anxiety. If you are longing for hope and certainty the Christian faith claims to offer us some real hope. The Bible has a joyful vision of the future based on true events from the past. This changes everything about how we live in the present. Join us for a three-week *Hope Explored* course on Thursday evenings, 7-8 pm, from 20<sup>th</sup> January to 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022. We will watch a film, discuss a question and explore a Bible passage about the Christian hope. Plan to come and why not bring a friend! What is the best future you could ever imagine?

Email [office@freenorthchurch.org](mailto:office@freenorthchurch.org) to request a weekly email update and for Zoom log-on codes.

**Supporting our work:** You can donate at our website (PayPal logo), in the offering plate, or directly to our “Free North Church” bank account (82-65-18, a/c number 40246657). Enquiries to [treasurer@freenorthchurch.org](mailto:treasurer@freenorthchurch.org).