



INVERNESS FREE NORTH CHURCH



NEWSLETTER

December 2017

Musings from the Manse

Dear friends,

I was born and brought up on the Island of Lewis. It's where I was educated, attended an FE College, met and married Jessie and where I, after 4 years studying Social work in Aberdeen, returned to in 1991 and worked for 12 years before moving to Edinburgh with my 4 children in 2003 to train for the Free Church Ministry. Since then I haven't returned as often as maybe I should have, but when I do there is one thing that strikes me every time. It seems that the place and the people have changed so much from the way I remember them. In fact, to a great extent, I am increasingly left thinking 'I don't really recognise this place at all now'.

I feel the same way as we approach yet another Christmas. As the big day approaches the town and the tele are full of lights and Christmas trees, adverts that I don't quite get, for perfumes that cost a fortune; Santa must be omnipresent because he seems to be in many places at the one time as well, and as an enticement to rack up our debts we're faced with offers on Sales (already!) for food, drink and entertainment that is sure to add to our Christmas cheer!

Yvonne Lyons is a Christian singer/songwriter whose song 'I Believe in Christmas' captures the reality of contemporary Christmas really well: 'O the madness of another year, wrap up your cold and festive cheer; It's time for supermarket aisles to fill up shelves for miles and miles'.

Christmas as we know it now is becoming unrecognizable from its original beginning. The Bible tells us the historical story of Christmas in this way: 'An angel appeared to shepherds and said, 'do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord' (Luke 2. 10-11).

I agree with Yvonne Lyon whose song refrains repeatedly 'But I, Oh I, believe in Christmas'. Despite what it is presented as, wrapped up as, perceived as, the Christmas that brings hope and salvation through Jesus Christ, is the Christmas I still believe in. And I hope you all do too.

Your friend and Pastor
Colin
Rev Colin MacLeod

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Please remember the following people in your prayers –

Housebound

Mrs Anna Cameron
Mrs Margaret Grant
Mrs Mary MacDonald
Mrs Effie MacIver
Mrs Christine MacRae

Residential Homes

Mrs Mary McCulloch – Aden House
Mrs Anna MacLeod – Ballifeary
Miss Nan MacDonald - Ballifeary
Mrs Joan Macleman – Fairfield Home
Mrs Margaret MacAulay - Highview
Mrs Joan Lamont - Highview
Mrs Dolly Campbell – Isobel Fraser Home
Mr Alasdair & Mrs Barbara Morrison, Isobel Fraser Home
Mrs Ishbel Graham - Kingsmills Home

CONDOLENCES

Mrs Dorothy MacEwan passed away at home on 14 December. The funeral will take place in the Free North on Friday 22nd December at 10.30am with interment in Kilvean at 11.30am. We offer our condolences to Dorothy's husband, William, to Ruth and Sandy, David and Ian, and their respective families and commit them to the care and keeping of our God and Father in heaven.

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Kirsteen and Alasdair Gillespie on the birth of their son, Angus George Gillespie, born Thursday 14th December at 12.30pm, 8lbs 6oz. Mother and child doing well!

CONGREGATIONAL NEWS AND ACTIVITIES

Home Groups

After consultation with the current Home Groups, the Session have decided that there will be no more meetings of Home Groups in the church. Hence, the final meeting in the church will be in December.

R2R

The weekly Road to Recovery meeting takes place in the Free North Hall at 7.30pm, access by the Church Street entrance. We are currently going through the 12 Steps of Recovery using Life Recovery Bibles in applying the Steps biblically and in a Christ centred way. If you have a dependency issue with alcohol/drugs and would like to speak to someone in confidence please contact 07918 775368 or 715809, or come along to the Thursday meeting.

Blythswood boxes

Many thanks to all who contributed items for the boxes. Thanks also to those who wrapped and filled the boxes over several days. We delivered around 50 very full boxes suitable for teenagers and adults to the depot before the deadline! By now these boxes will be en-route to very needy folks in several countries. Blythswood add suitable tracts to the boxes - pray that as the Word is read God would work in the hearts and minds of many.

Jane MacLeod

Dates for the Diary

December 2017

Sunday 3rd	Colin taking both services
Tuesday 5th	GGG in the Manse at 7.30pm
Wednesday 6th	Prayer round tables in the Hall at 7.30pm
Thursday 7th	Office Bearers' prayer meeting in the Manse at 8 am Kidzone for ages 4-14 in the hall from 6-7pm weekly R2R meeting in the hall from 7.30-9pm weekly
Saturday 9th	Likely Dads at 10.30am in the hall. Closes for Christmas period today.
Sunday 10th	FN services taken by Chris Macleod (am) and Ronnie Philipps (pm). Colin preaching in Kiltarlity Isobel Fraser service at 3 pm
Wednesday 13th	Home Groups meet at 7.30pm
Sunday 17th	Colin taking both services. Induction of new Office Bearers at morning service Cameron House service at 3 pm
Tuesday 19th	Coffee @ Dobbies at 10.30am
Wednesday, 20 th	Tumbletots Christmas party in the Hall. Closes for Christmas period today – resumes 10 January
Thursday 21st	Kidzone/Sunday School/Creche party from 6-8pm in the hall
Sunday 24th	Colin taking am service. Carol service at 6.30pm
Sunday 31st	Colin taking both services.

January 2018

Monday 1st	New Year's Day service at 11 am
Wednesday 3rd	Prayer round tables in the hall at 7.30pm
Thursday 4th	Office Bearer's prayer meeting in the Manse at 8 am
Sunday 7th	Colin taking both services
Tuesday 9th	Lunch in the hall from 12.30-2pm. GGG meets in Manse at 7.30pm
Wednesday 10th	Tumble Tots meets in the hall from 10 am to 11.30am weekly
Saturday 13 th	Likely Dads at 10.30am in the hall every 2 nd and 4 th Saturday
Sunday 14th	Colin taking both services
Tuesday 16th	Coffee @ Dobbies at 10.30am

Wednesday 17th

Sunday 21st

Sunday 28th

Home Groups at 7.30pm

Colin taking both services

Colin taking both services

Congregational fellowship at 8 pm in the hall

20 SCHEMES

Firstly let me thank you all for your prayerful support of the new work in the Merkinch and South Kessock. Prayer is the building block for mission in this area. We have had our first couple of meetings. At these meetings, we are studying the Mark's Gospel. We have a time for Q&A after every service.

Please pray for the launch team as we grow together in Christ. Pray for the area, that people would be receptive to hearing about Jesus that we as a group would engage our community in a culturally relative way.

Yours in Christ

Chris

OTHER NEWS

The Leprosy Mission Scotland

On behalf of the local committee I would like to thank those in the Free North who helped in any way to make our annual coffee morning such a success. The proceeds on the day and donations thereafter have enabled us to send £2,250 to support Nilphamari Hospital and community- based rehabilitation for leprosy-affected people in Bangladesh. I have left a few blue tubs on the shelf at the lane door. I would be delighted if you took one. When you have filled it, you may give it to me for the ongoing work of the Mission.

Anne Muirden

Dear friends,

After five months here, we are slowly getting used to the weather which is now much cooler at a 18°C average. Apologies for rubbing it in for all of you who are covered in snow right now! It has been a time of adjustment and getting used to the way things work in this part of the world, but overall, we have seen the Lord's hand in so many everyday life situations.

It has been very encouraging that since the day we came we have seen new faces almost every Sunday in church. Some people that had left the church are coming back; others that have been looking for a church are joining us. One of them is Alcy, a lovely lady from Chicago whose parents were originally from Guatemala. She had been looking for a church to call home and through a conversation at a yard sale she came the next day and has stayed with us since.

One-day Chris was at the barbers and met a man with a tattoo covering his entire arm and began to talk to him. He had been in prison, separated from his wife, and was now trying to make his marriage work. Four years ago, his life was transformed when he started to follow Christ. He had struggled to feel a part of some of the huge churches around Tampa, so Chris invited him to church and since then he has been coming. We had been praying with him for a job and 2 weeks ago he got one.

Another time Joshua got a lesson in his school that we had to ask questions about so Chris make an appointment to see his teacher. This led to a fascinating conversation and the teacher actually came to church the next Sunday and we hope a conversation on science and faith may be struck up with him. This also led to the opportunity to speak in both boy's schools about Chris's work. Similarly, through a school trip Yaz spoke to a parent about the Lord and church. He was a Christian that has not been attending church for a long time. After a month of praying for him, he and his family appeared in church and are coming regularly and enjoy being at Hope. There have been other similar encouragements.

The church organises a lot of different activities for families. One of the most fun was the chillie-beef cook-off where you got to try 14 different chillies and pick a winner – highly recommended!

Yaz has been able to start a prayer group on Tuesday mornings with about 4 people attending regularly and we have seen God's direction as we pray for His vision and future for Hope Church. She is hoping to help with the youth fellowship for middle school age teens from January onwards.

The boys are adjusting relatively well. The schools are very good with lots of studies that keep them occupied. Matthew misses Scotland, his school and his friends the most. Both boys need to make good friends; we hope that with time they find them. We got them to Universal Studios for a few days in November and they loved that. It's also been great having visitors from Scotland, two so far, hopefully more to come.

Of course, after some months here we all feel homesick, missing family, friends and the beauty of the Highlands. It helps to know that many of you are still there for us and we trust that we are where God wants us to serve.

Pray for us as we seek to minister, love, preach and guide Hope church during 2018. We also need to find a place to call home in the near future, good friends for the boys, conversions in the church, for Yaz' mum (Naomi) who is now blind but waiting for eye surgery and a miracle to be able to see, even if only partially. Please also pray for the Christmas Eve Carol service that it would be blessed to many. Thanks for being our friends, partners and intercessors in this call.

Wishing you a Christmas full of Jesus' presence and a blessed New Year.

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”. Isaiah 9:6

Chris, Yaz, Joshua and Matthew Smart

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Christmas 2017

“If I had not come....” (John 15:22)

If Christ had not come.....

- the Bible would stop at Malachi.
- No Christ to comfort.
- No church spires in our neighbourhoods pointing us to heaven.
- No bells ringing out great tidings of joy - a manger, a cross, a throne, a crown!
- No books written about our Saviour.
- No gospel sermons of hope and eternal salvation preached.
- No word of a glorious resurrection, or the end of sorrow and pain and despair.
- No open heaven - only “dust to dust and ashes to ashes.”
- No joyous singing of praise to The Son of God who became a man to enable men to become the sons of God.

“I have come....” (John 10:10)