

GUILD NEWS JANUARY 2021

Dear Friends,

It is now 7th January and this communication is well overdue. I did indicate I would put something out in December but for personal reasons it just didn't happen.

I trust everyone had a blessed Christmas though a very different one and I hope and trust as we go on into 2021 we will all find a year with happier times.

I have received some 2020 items from members so please indulge me as I begin by reflecting on Christmas 2020.



I cannot express my delight when I was told the Christmas Star was being put up outside Rorison Church during December and the 12 days of Christmas. As I drive into Ashgill I always get such a sense of joy and peace when I see the lights shining out from the Church. I know I am not the only one who looks forward to this announcement of Christmas. All our thanks must go to Bob and Rona Campbell who take on this responsibility and say a wee prayer that the weather was kind enough to allow Bob up his ladder. However Bob the weather is not so great now so do leave it up there until it is safe to go back up your ladder, I am sure Rona will be at the bottom saying her wee prayer until you are back down.

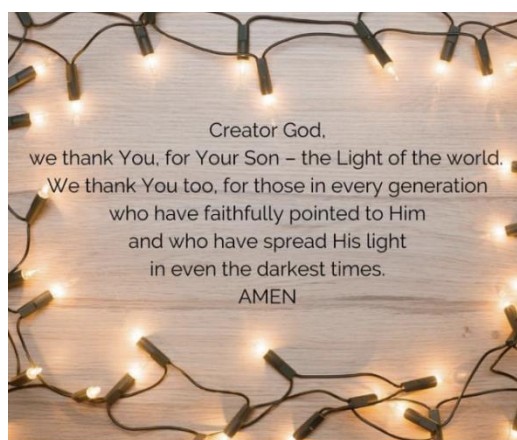
Each Sunday in Advent our Minister John came into our homes, via modern technology, as he ministered to us. Revealing, thought provoking, informative, comforting messages in an unprecedented season of Advent. There was so much talk of cancelling Christmas. How can you cancel the celebration of our Lord's birth? Maybe the glitter and glamour of festivity can be cancelled but the Festival of Christmas Thanksgiving for the child born in a stable destined to die on a cross is indelible. Yes we missed the fellowship of being in Church, the joy of singing carols and sharing fellowship but Sunday by Sunday we were reassured that Covid 19 was amongst us but God is still King and still on His throne.



Christmas Morning we were united again by John as he brought us a wonderful service of Readings and Carols. All our thanks to him and Ewan for everything they do week by week
May God richly bless them.

Thanks to Norah McGukkin, our church officer, who made our sanctuary look so beautiful and Bruce Archibald and Willie Hamilton for the Nativity Scene. Week by week we saw the Advent Angels increase. Thanks to all who took time to knit them and Norah who placed them week by week on the tree. (Now safely stored away to reappear in what we hope will be a much better Christmas 2021)

Our Christmas Church



A Note From Anne McHolm

I received a wooden cut out bauble shaped ornament for my tree from a friend in Canada
This is what it said

CHRISTMAS 2020

★
For
God so
loved the
world He gave
His one and only
Son that whoever
believes in Him shall not
perish but have eternal life
John
3:16

Life was a little strange this year
and the world seemed so unsure
but the one thing that we learnt was
that we couldn't love each other more
we lived a moment in history
our lives changed beyond doubt
but we learnt the true meaning of what family was about
We will hold our loved ones a little tighter
and celebrate what we have
Because Christmas 2020
Will be the best we have ever had

★
For
God so
loved the
world He gave
His one and only
Son that whoever
believes in Him shall not
perish but have eternal life
John
3:16

Very true Anne McHolm

A Reflection from Rae Hunter

Dear Lord I turned the calendar
Another month gone by!
It looked so fresh and clean and new,
It made me pause and sigh.

What would the weeks ahead all hold?
And would I treat them right?
I hoped the days would all be good
And filled with love and light.

Please help me, Lord, to do my best
Whatever lies in store?
Remind me you are always near
To turn the page once more.



Candlemas



The tree is down now. "I wish it could be Christmas every day"

is no longer booming out from all quarters. BUT is Christmas over. NO

The story of Jesus only begins on Christmas Day. Next is Epiphany when we remember the Magi visiting the Christ Child.

Then we have Candlemas celebrated on the 2nd February. So what is Candlemas?



It is the celebration of the purification of Mary, Mother of Christ, Jesus first visit to the temple and Jesus being presented to God. All this took place 40 days after the birth of Christ.

One question asked is why Mary and Joseph took two doves. Doves would be used as a sacrifice for poorer people who could not afford a lamb.

The story can be read in Luke 2:22-40. It is also the fulfilment of the prophecy of Simeon and Anna.

Another fact is in some Churches priests bless the candles that will be used during the following year. Again this reflects on Jesus being the "Light of The World".

So let us as a Guild perhaps unite again with each other by reading Luke 2:22-40 on Candlemas Day, 2nd February at 7.00pm while lighting a candle and giving thanks for the Saviour of the World and the young girl chosen by God to be his most Holy Mother.

In early times the traditional food at Candlemas was pancakes. Why not make some pancakes on 2nd February and perhaps share with a neighbour.

Perhaps we could think of all mothers, parents, relatives, friends who are grieving lost ones during this pandemic and remember Jesus who sacrificed his life for our sakes asking God's blessing on those who are making sacrifices now in our hospitals etc to save life.

IF Candlemas Day BE
FAIR AND BRIGHT, Winter WILL
HAVE ANOTHER FIGHT. IF
Candlemas Day BRINGS
CLOUD AND RAIN, Winter
will not come again.



Words of Wisdom from Rona Campbell

Life is mostly froth and bubble,
Two things stand like stone,
Kindness in another's trouble,
Courage in your own.

Adam Lindsay Gordon

Also recommended by Rona

For anyone who enjoyed "The Durrell's" on TV I would highly recommend the book *My Family and Other Animals* by Gerald Durrell. It is an account by Gerry of his family's time on Corfu. It is interesting and very funny. The edition I had was a Penguin Travel Biography which includes lots of drawings by the author.

(Available on Amazon for £7.15)

And so...the tree is down, the baubles back in the box and the wrapping paper in the bin. BUT we know this is not the end. The nights have stretched by at least 10-15 minutes, spring is coming and the vaccine is here.

We are an Easter Church and without Christ on the cross to rise again for our salvation then there would have been no need for the babe in the stall.

John Chapter 1 verses 14-18 was the text for Sunday 3rd Jan. The word became flesh and dwelt among us. Emmanuel... God with us.

So my little ramblings over Christmas reflections done and dusted I trust you have indulged me and that we carry the Joy of Christmas and the Hope of Easter into 2021.

Happy New Year.

A Message From Joan Pollok

Dear Fellow Guild Members

WOW what a year 2020 was. We started with our first lockdown in Spring of the year, we continued the lockdown through Summer and here we are again facing three weeks of lockdown in January 2021.

As I am sitting writing this it is very wintry outside it has been snowing and even if we could get out it is treacherous under foot. I am also aware of those of our members who live alone, I am conscious of the fact that they are unable to see their family and friends. I am also aware that we have members who are facing great fear and sorrow as we begin a new year, so those of us who have company in our homes and whose families are well must spare a thought for those members and remember them in our prayers.

Christmas has come and gone and for most of us it was probably the strangest Christmas we have ever had. We saw our family for one day and it was lovely, but you were always aware that this would be it for some time. One thing that I know for certain stayed the same and that was the real reason for the season, Jesus Christ.

Whilst we gave our loved ones and friends gifts, let us remember the greatest gift that we were given that wonderful day in Bethlehem when the Saviour of the world was born.

I recently came across a small book that someone very kindly gave to me. It is titled God's little book of Love. There are some beautiful quotes within it and I would like to share a couple with you.

THINK LOVELY THOUGHTS

Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are lovely – think on these things

LET TODAY BE YOUR DAY

Today is your day and mine, so let us search for the lovely things.

TRUST IN PRAYER

Prayer is the answer to every problem in life. It puts us in tune with divine wisdom, which knows how to adjust everything perfectly.

Like most people I have a favourite Bible reading Colossians Chp 1 vs 15-23

If you read it from the Message the heading is "Christ Holds it all Together"

We are indeed facing troublesome times. We are afraid of what the future will bring. But we have something solid to hold on to. The Love of God which will never let us down. He knows our fears and He holds us in His Hands. As we venture into a New Year may the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all and may we find 2021 filled with good health and happiness

Joan

Church Of Scotland Prayer for the Day On Face Book 7th January 2021



You never neglect us.
Even when we blame or berate You;
even when we are too despairing to ask
or too weary to find words;
it is Your pleasure to help,
and for this we thank You.

A Letter From Lily Budgell



Dear Guild Members,

I hope you have all had a peaceful Christmas and New Year.

I have completed our balance sheet for the year 2020 and would like to thank you all for paying membership for 2021. As you may already know the membership fees have been reduced to £9 for 2021 and as you have already paid £12. I was hoping that you would on behalf of The Guild give the remaining £3 to The Guild Charities along with the £65 that was raised from selling the Advent Jars that would mean a total of £125 being sent to The Guild Charities.

Can I say a Big thank you to the members who handed in Smarty Tubes and bought the Advent Jars. Your continued support, helps us meet our commitment to others.

Hoping we can meet again in person soon, but in the meantime can continue to work together for the benefit of others.

God's Blessings

Lily

Treasurer

Thank you Lily for keeping our accounts in order and having to trail to Hamilton for banking during the present restrictions. Thanks also to Eric who takes you.

Ann Carson

Thanks to Ann who posted out the Guild News to us. I hope you have all managed to read it and perhaps given thought to some of the ideas in it. I know Ann herself has started a Thanksgiving Jar. Please share with us if you decide to take up one of the suggestions or even have one of your own. Maybe we could even have a virtual Soup Lunch and if not donating physically remember all those who maybe don't have a bowl of soup to partake of or even a roof over their head, food on the table and a fire in the hearth.

Thank You

Please give a heartfelt thanks to all my Guild and Church friends for their support, cards, flowers and prayers during David's illness and passing. Your support has been a great comfort to me at a sad time knowing I only have to lift the phone and someone will be there. Thanks to Rev John Stevenson for his prayers and support.

Linda Marshall

Prayers for others

Please continue to keep Linda, Scott and family in your prayers.

Also the family of Lily Hill who passed away on 31st December. Lily was a regular at our Guild functions especially the Annual Outing which she enjoyed so much. Her funeral will take place on 20th January.

Anne McHolm has had a fall on some black ice and cracked her humerus. Please keep Anne in your thoughts and prayers

Let us also remember Mary Gove (Larkhall) who has had a stroke, Mary Grove (Netherburn) a faithful Guild Member, and all who are having tests, treatment or have not been out in the last 10 months due to health conditions. Keep them safe and in good spirit.

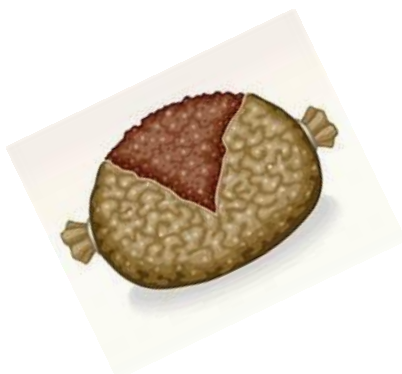
We give thanks for the vaccine and pray we will soon be able to meet again even if it is socially distanced.

2021

As we enter January we have missed out on our Guild Fayre, Christmas Dinner and Musical Evening. In January our first speaker would have been our Minister John Stevenson. We thank John for the Services he has been bringing to us during the Pandemic. His sincere ministry which teaches us, challenges us and comforts us with reassurance that no matter what God is still with us. May God bless John and his family as we go forward into 2021.

The next meeting would have been the Burns Supper. Hearty food, good speeches and excellent entertainment. Our Immortal Memory would have been delivered by Eric Budgell President Larkhall Burns Club. Eric has very kindly sent a copy of this and I am sure you will enjoy reading it. Perhaps even save it to Burns Night on 25th January. Cook a wee bit haggis, tatties and neeps. Say the Selkirk Grace, enjoy your meal then sit back in the comfort of your own living room and enjoy Eric's Immortal Memory. You could even get Alexa to provide some good Scottish music.

ERIC



Immortal Memory

Can I firstly say that I am delighted to have been asked to give you this Immortal Memory. I just did not expect it to be in these circumstances.

I just hope that I can do you all justice, and impart something that you did not know.

What I would like to speak to you about is Burns and Jamaica.

Robert Burns had a very short but, eventful life. What he managed to cram into his years, most people would struggle to complete in a full average life.

Some years were good times, some were bad, none more so for the man and his family than the years 1784 - 1786.

For me his spiralling misfortunes at this time started with the death of his father William in February 1784. Burns, now at the age of 25, found himself, head of the family, and being responsible for a farm at Lochlie that was not making money.

To try and improve the family's financial situation, Burns and his brother Gilbert secretly arranged to lease Mossiel Farm just outside Mauchline.

Burns was now back to being a full-time farmer, having tried his hand in other professions without much success, but was still a prolific writer of poems and songs.

At this time, Burns was having a relationship with Betsey Paton, who was a servant girl at Lochlie, brought in when Burn's father was ill. This was more of a casual relationship, than a serious one on Burns part. This liaison resulted in Betsey becoming pregnant. Burns broke off this relationship with Betsey Paton, the exact time of this is unknown.

Burns carried on with his life pretty much as normal, but then whilst attending a dance in Mauchline in April 1785 he first came across Jean Armour, who had an immediate impact on him.

Burns started to see Jean Armour shortly after this time, and their relationship was staring to bloom. He mentions her for the first time in one of his shorts, "The Belles of Mauchline".

In Mauchline there dwells six proper young belles,

The pride of the place and its neighbourhood a';

Their carriage and dress, a stranger would guess,

In Lon'on or Paris, they'd gotten it a'.

Miss Miller is fine, Miss Markland's divine,
Miss Smith she has wit, and Miss Betty is braw:
There's beauty and fortune to get wi' Miss Morton,
But Armour's the jewel for me o' them a'.

In May 1785, Betsey Paton gave birth to a baby girl. This created a situation for Burns, as he never denied that he was the father.

Burns made arrangements for the child to be brought into the care of his family at Mossgiel.

The child was named Elizabeth (Dear Bought Bess) as he lovingly referred to her was brought to Mossgiel and arrangement of settlement made with her mother.

Confirmation of his love and devotion to the child is contained in his poem.

"A poet's welcome to his love-begotten daughter".

Thou's welcome, wean; mishanter fa me,
If toughts o' thee, or yet thy mammie,
Shall ever daunt me or awe me, My sweet wee lady,
Or if I blush when thou shalt ca' me, Tyta or daddie.

Tho' now they ca' me fornicator,
An' tease my name in countra clatter,
The mair they talk, I'm kent the better, E'en let them clash;
An auld wife's tongue's a feckless matter, to gie ane fash.

Welcome! my bonie, sweet, wee dochter,
Tho' ye come here a wee unsought for,
And tho' your comin' I hae fought for, Baith kirk and queir;
Yet, by my faith, ye're no unwrought for,
That I shall swear!

Burns continued to see Jean Armour although the child must have been a complication, Jean did not appear to have particularly put off of Burns by this. Obviously his charms knew no bounds, and her love for him was becoming very strong.

Burns did have a bit of a reputation in the area. A reputation which did not go down well in the Armour household. This did not prevent Jean from still seeing Burns. The relationship got stronger and stronger as the year went on to its end.

In or around February 1786, Burns learned that Jean was pregnant. This as you can imagine devastated the Armour family, as at this time, it brought with it great shame on the family.

Jean's father James Armour learnt of this in March of that year of his daughter's situation and was bitterly opposed to any marriage of his daughter to Burns and forbade her to see him.

Burn's life was once again in turmoil. His feelings for Jean were so strong, but, he was unable to see her. His life was spiralling out of his control. He sought solace from wherever he could find it, be it from drink or from women.

He struck up a relationship with a servant girl of a friend Gavin Hamilton, Mary Campbell was her name (Highland Mary) as she is better known as.

Mary was of questionable character, but this did not seem to be a problem for Burns.

This relationship grew, as I see it, from all the anguish that was in his life, and he was not thinking straight. Burns started to make plans to emigrate with Mary Campbell to Jamaica.

Jamaica.

Jamaica at this time was not a very hospitable place, for various reasons.

As like most of the world, there was poor sanitation. In conjunction with the intense heat, especially in summer, there was a lot of cases of various deadly diseases. This was most prevalent amongst the slaves in the country.

The use of slaves in everyday life was still a common practice, in fact the majority of the total population was made up of slaves.

In a census taken around 1775, it was estimated that out of a total population of 209,000 people, 192,000 were slaves.

This I feel is a statistic that Burns would have had a problem with and may well have landed himself in trouble with their masters.

The slaves were being used in the plantations which were producing coffee and sugar, and as a by-product Rum.

The climate in Jamaica was certainly warmer than Burns had been used to in Scotland, but as we all know today, warmer climates have more aggressive weather conditions when low pressure works its way in from the mid-Atlantic.

In fact Jamaica was hit by a hurricane in August 1785 and again in October 1786.

The aftermath of these hurricanes created havoc and devastation all over Jamaica resulting in destroyed crops and famine.

Would Burns have wanted willingly to have got caught up in all of that, unless it was a last resort, unless it was a realistic prospect of making his fortune, it was not a place any person of sound mind would want to be.

Burns had received an offer of employment as a book-keeper by one Charles Douglas who managed an estate near Port Antonio.

Charles Douglas was the brother of Dr. Patrick Douglas, an acquaintance of Burns.

Burns had every intention to go to Jamaica and take Mary Campbell with him.

This is all but confirmed in a song Burns wrote which includes the lines.

Will ye go to the Indies my Mary, and leave Auld Scotia's shore?
Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary, across the Atlantic roar,

He appears to have been quite serious with regard to Mary in the song 'The Highland Lassie, O', would suggest this.

She has my heart, she has my hand.

By secret troth and honor's band!

Till the mortal stroke she'll lay me low,

I'm thine, O Highland Lassie, O.

We know that Burns last saw Mary Campbell Campbell in May 1786 to say their farewells before her trip back home to say her good-byes to her family.

She returned back to Greenock in the autumn, the exact date is speculative, but she was struck down with a fever from which she died. It is also thought that she was pregnant at this time with Burn's child.

To go back to Jean Armour.

Having learnt of her pregnancy, her family had sent her to Paisley in March 1786.

James Armour her father had sought a writ against Burns to provide his daughter and her child.

On June 10th. 1786, Jean Armour had sent a letter to the Kirk Session confessing to being pregnant and that Robert Burns was the father.

When he found out about the writ, Burns conveyed all his property and rights to his poems to his brother Gilbert to prevent the financial ruin of his family.

Burns then went into hiding, moving from friend to friend until he was due to depart to Jamaica.

On July 31st. 1786 his Kilmarnock edition was published. He informed his brother that the profits from its sale had to be used for the maintenance of his daughter Elizabeth.

Burns was due to set sail for Jamaica early in September, but he postponed this departure from Greenock, for a ship that was to be sailing from the Port of Leith, later in the month.

On 8th. September, Jean Armour gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl.

She named the children Robert and Jean.

Burns did not leave at the end of September as planned, and received news at the beginning of October of Mary Campbell's death.

Once again his life was in turmoil.

He received a letter from critic and fellow poet Dr. Thomas Blacklock congratulating him on the sell-out of his Kilmarnock edition and suggested to him that he should publish a further edition, this time in Edinburgh. This persuaded Burns to abandon his plans for Jamaica, and with assistance from his Masonic friends to pursue the Edinburgh edition.

Burns was a dedicated Mason, and spent a lot of his time with the brotherhood. This was also proving to be a big wrench to him to leave them all behind. This is made quite clear in the following, dedicated in a song to the Lodge St. James in Tarbolton.

Adieu! A heart-warm fond adieu;
Dear brothers of the Mystic Tie!
Ye favoured, ye enlighten'd few,
Companions of my social joy!
Tho I to foreign lands must bie,
Pursuing fortun'd slidd'ry ba';
With melting heart and brimful eye,
I'll mind you still, tho far awa.

And you farewell! Whose merits claim
Justly the highest badge to wear:
Heav'n bless your honour'd, noble name,
To Masonry and Scotia dear!
A last request permit me here
When yearly ye assemble a',
One round, I ask it with a tear,
To him, the bard that's far awa.

This has been written by a man who is confused and in pain, and is trying to fight against the inevitable. But, as if in answer to a prayer, whilst he is preparing to leave for Jamaica, he receives a letter from Dr. Blacklock which persuades him in conjunction with pleas from other Masonic friends that he should publish a further edition of his works. The support given him at this time by the freemasons in Edinburgh greatly assisted him in his success of the now well-known Edinburgh Edition.

For me, these words by his own hand give us an insight into the feelings of the inner man who was and is Robert Burns.

As I stated earlier, Burns had a very short life.

But one thing that struck me whilst compiling this was the fact that he was a very prolific letter writer as well as a prolific poet and song writer.

I cannot imagine where he got the time and energy to write all the letters he wrote.

Can you just dream of the Gems that have been lost had he had the advantage of Facebook or Twitter.

A Burns poem from Kay – I often find myself using the last verse as a prayer

To conclude in these difficult times may I bring you my favourite Burns Poem?

Robert Burns wrote this at a time of great melancholy after writing to his father quoting Revelation 21:4 “He will wipe all tears from their eyes”.

PRAYER WRITTEN UNDER PRESSURE OF ANGUISH

O Thou great being what Thou art
Surpasses me to know:
Yet sure I am, that know to thee
Are all thy works below

Sure Thou, Almighty, canst not act
From cruelty or wrath!
O, free my eyes from weary tears,
Or close them fast in death

Thy creature here before Thee stand,
All wretched and distressed;
Yet sure these ills that wring my soul
Obey some high behest.

**BUT if I must afflicted be,
To suit some wise design
Then man my soul with firm resolve
To bear and not repine.**

