



THE ANCHOR

The magazine of Kiltarlity and Kirkhill Church

Christmas 2020



The thing about Christmas is...
it doesn't matter what kind of mood you're in -
it's a fresh start.



Living in the love of Jesus in the rural Highlands

www.kiltarlityandkirkhill.org.uk

SC: 003866; 014918

Christmas Message from our Moderator

"Social distancing was out the window. Personal space was at a premium. Jesus was teaching and a large crowd had gathered to listen. Some friends had carried a man who was paralysed. They hoped that Jesus may do something to help. When they eventually got their patient close to him, Jesus said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven".

This was probably not what they had in mind. Not only that, but many who had gathered to listen were theologians and religious lawyers. "Your sins are what?" If someone were to harm or offend you, and I were to declare them to be forgiven: I imagine that you might have a problem with me. Who am I to forgive someone who has sinned against others? As indeed we all have.

In declaring someone's sins to be forgiven: Jesus is associating himself with, even claiming to be, God. God is the One against whom all our sins are ultimately directed. No matter who else we harm or offend: our sin is always against God.

Jesus tackled the moral problem directly by saying that healing this man would be a sign that he indeed had authority to forgive. He told the man to get up, pick up his stretcher and go home: and he did.

There is much talk this year of missing out on various aspects of our "normal" Christmas. Why not take the opportunity to focus on why the Christ of Christmas is someone whose arrival into our world of sin is worth celebrating? COVID is a temporal problem. Our need of forgiveness is one for which there is no purely human

solution. At Christmas we remember that God indeed became one of us in order that, through faith in Jesus, we might be forgiven and know the hope of eternity in a right relationship with him.

May you know the peace and the hope that belongs to those whose trust is in Jesus, the Christ of Christmas.

Seoras Mackenzie

Christmas services

This year it has been impossible to have the usual Christmas services of Nativity and Watchnight in church, but as we have been able to open Kiltarlity Church, we have had an Advent wreath and the candles lit each week. Church services are being shown on Zoom, and on December 24th, we are holding a Christingle service on Zoom.

A Christingle is made from an orange with a candle in it, a red ribbon round it, and four cocktail sticks with sweets and fruits pushed into the sides. Each element has a meaning, and to find out more, please join us on Zoom, details as follows:

Kiltarlity & Kirkhill Church Christingle Service - 24th Dec. 4pm.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85844984422?pwd=cG5UQWs5b1dXcFp5T2k1TWxMaDFKUT09>

Meeting ID: 858 4498 4422

Passcode: 2021

Or by phone: 0131 460 1196



From the editors.....

For this year, we have asked a few people to contribute stories of their childhood as well as some thoughts on what Christmas means to them. Some are amusing, some are serious and thought-provoking, but all are worth reading!

PS Also a few truly terrible jokes.....

From Ian Morrison -

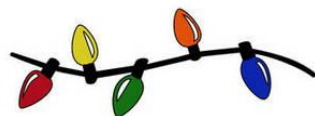
The upside of a Christmas set against the backdrop of Covid restrictions might hopefully be a realisation to many that this is actually a Christian Festival! The retail growth industry with record spending each year has surely been curtailed and maybe this year we can try to focus on the substance of Christmas rather than the form and ritual invented by our Victorian forefathers. All the rules arising from the pandemic have perforce introduced some moderation of the usual clutter of food, parties, presents and so on and that may not be a bad thing. Maybe this year we can go back to basics and disentangle the truth of Christ's birth from the tinsel, the robins, the donkeys and the Christmas trees. This Christmas will be different from any other - jobs are under threat and there are shop and business closures everywhere. Can we make it a marker to keep our focus clear and remind us of what really matters? A marker to tune into another agenda which matters much more than our own and reminds us that our own story only makes sense within the bigger picture of God's story. Jesus will always keep us company and help us find forgiveness, strength and direction - we don't need all the

fripperies of Christmas - Christmas is about the real world. What it's not about is what my household calls "The Boast in the Post" which arrives with a particular card each year. The senders obviously feel that my family have been deprived of information about them which can only delight. Let me share last year's with you - "Its been a historic year for the McBrag family, things just seem to get better and better. Boris has been promoted to a seat on the board. How he managed to get his golf handicap down to three I simply do not know. The children have been just as energetic - Tarquin got sixteen highers at A grade and Tabitha's seminal concerto for the oboe is to be premiered later this year.....". Aye, right. Very soon though we will be celebrating a very different message, a real one - a message of joy and hope telling us that there is so much more to life than we sometimes make of it. May we all have a peaceful and joyous Christmas and meet to worship together ere long.

Ian Morrison

Does anyone remember?

Fat, multicoloured paper Christmas garlands which pulled out like a concertina and needed string through them to hold them up? And what about the fairy lights? A set of twelve with some not working and a generous application of black insulating tape to keep the wires vaguely electrically safe. Health and safety was not the same in the fifties.....



My Lockdown - what it meant to me!

Longing to see family and friends, and loneliness for some people.

Ordinary structure of life suspended.

Coffee and cakes with friends sorely missed.

Kisses and hugs from children no more.

Desperate for a holiday.

Oh no! not more gardening, cooking and cleaning.

Wonderful friends and neighbours offering help.

Now looking forward to a vaccine being found.

But still - it will pass, so -

Don't Quit (Author unknown)

When things go wrong as they sometimes will;
When the road you're trudging seems all uphill;
When the funds are low and the debts are high
And you want to smile, but have to sigh;
When care is pressing you down a bit -
Rest if you must, but do not quit.

Success is failure turned inside out,
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt;
And you can never tell how close you are -
It may be near when it seems so far;
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit.
It's when things go wrong that you must not quit.

Jeanette McLellan (still smiling!)

Maureen MacDonald writes -

"We used my dad's socks as stockings at Christmas and one year my stocking had a hole in it. Great excitement on Christmas morning when I got my stocking from Santa and I noticed there was no longer a hole in it... I was amazed that Santa had managed to mend my stocking as well as fill it!!"

A very different Christmas

Some years ago, we had to honour the wishes of my Father-in-law and take his ashes over to North Western Australia to scatter at sea. Charles' shift system really does not allow for much lea way and so we ended up literally doing a flying visit, including 3 whole days of driving (with some overnights) to get to the area where Charles used to live. Suffice to say it was tiring, stressful and a difficult time for the family. Charles and I only had a total of 10 days and so we were reliant on our faith to literally get us through each day. However, we were blessed with a couple of days in Monkey Mia which is one of the most beautiful places on earth with clear blue sea, dolphins and even turtles. We had our final 2 nights in Perth where I got to see the boarding school Charles went to (and whose chapel was funded by a chap from Inverness) We also had the pleasure of going to the Christmas Eve carol service in Perth's Anglican cathedral, sitting like sardines in a very hot can whilst praising our Lord with the most wonderful mixed crowd of people and coming out into a very cooling 34 degrees C. We had a very unusual Christmas day walking in the local park and eating a Thai dish for dinner. Altogether a memorable Christmas for reasons good and bad. But, one where God showed me personally that He will always make good from any

bad situation, something I am clinging onto during this very difficult year and I would encourage you to do the same. God is good - All the time!

Angie Cosens



Thank you

These months have brought a lot of changes all round, but there have been many people who have worked hard this year and in many previous years to give service to our churches. Some have stepped back from active work and others have come forward to fill their places. I expect we know who they are. There are also those in the present situation sorting out the problems with the online services, keeping the youth work on track and managing Covid regulations. Let's not forget the 'unseen' people who do the cleaning, tidy the grounds, water the plants, put up the Christmas tree and decorations, man the doors, work the AV on a Sunday morning and generally keep things going. Of course, we have to thank our moderator for his efforts on our behalf, and the team of pulpit supply preachers who have been so inspiring in the vacancy. There are many names that should be mentioned, and when we get together again in person, there may be personal acknowledgements in church and special little ceremonies of thanks, but for now, please say a thank you to any you happen to meet, and say a thank you in your hearts for them all.

Another memory

One of the things that I look forward to the most at Christmas is the food, we do love all the treats that are in the shops at this time of year, especially the Panetone and Lebkuchen. When I was young my family was involved in international student ministry in Aberdeen. This meant that for a few years we had students from different countries around the world join us on Christmas Day for dinner. We had a guy from Bavaria who was studying Gaelic for whom Christmas traditions were not so different from ours, but introduced us to Stolen Cake. I fell in love with the delicious chunks of marzipan and powdered sugar topping. There was the year, not long after Live Aid, that we had someone from Ethiopia waxing lyrical about how fertile much of the country is, producing a rich harvest. On Boxing Day we would have our Korean friends over and they would bring Kimchi, a spicy fermented cabbage that I still love. Aside from all the food that we associate with Christmas, having people from other countries join us helped us reflect on the traditions that we associate with Christmas and now being a "mixed culture" family whilst we love many of these traditions the most important aspect of Christmas for us is celebrating the gift of Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us. One year we had a Muslim girl from Malaysia. When she asked us what Christmas crackers had to do with the birth of Jesus we were left scratching our heads. This was well before google, so we never have researched the history of crackers... until now. It turns out it was a Victorian invention to sell the miniature version of stolen cake - a sugared almond!

Leonora

Talking of food.....

We use the Christmas Spiced Bundt recipe as both a cake and a pudding as it's really rich and delicious. It's also a great opportunity to use a Bundt tin that I have stuck at the back of a cupboard! It makes quite a large cake so it can do a few meals, which is handy around Christmas time! We have tried lots of gingerbread recipes over the years for making biscuits and houses and we have found this recipe to be the easiest and most reliable. We use lots of different shapes and ice them to make them look Christmassy. We have sometimes also put a hole through them and tied ribbon round to hang on the Christmas tree (before we had a dog!)

Anneliese and Isobel Garvie



Spiced Chocolate Bundt Cake



Makes 1 large cake

You will need: a 25cm diameter, 2 litre Bundt tin

200g unsalted butter, diced
30g cocoa powder
100ml hot water
200g dark chocolate, roughly
chopped
300g light muscovado sugar
4 large eggs

175g self-raising flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
3 teaspoons ground ginger
2 teaspoons ground mixed
spice

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons ground
cinnamon

40g chopped glacé or
crystallised ginger

For the glaze

300ml double cream

160g dark chocolate, finely chopped

1. Heat the oven to 180°C/350°F/gas 4 and grease the Bundt tin well, making sure to get into all of the crevices, or the cake may stick to the tin.
2. Put the cocoa into a small bowl and pour over the hot water, whisking together until smooth. Put the bitter dark chocolate in a heatproof bowl set over a pan of simmering water, and melt, stirring occasionally. Remove from the heat and allow to cool slightly.
3. Put the sugar and eggs in a large bowl and, using an electric mixer, whisk until thick and pale. With the mixer still running, pour in the chocolate and mix until smooth and fully combined.

Whisk together the flour, baking powder and spices in a separate bowl. Sift the dry ingredients over the chocolate mixture and fold together until no lumps remain. Add the ginger and the cocoa mixture and mix to combine. Pour into the prepared tin, then place on a baking sheet, transfer to the heated oven and bake for 40-45 minutes or until a skewer inserted into the thickest part of the cake comes out clean. Leave to cool in the tin for about 10 minutes before carefully inverting onto a wire rack set over a parchment-lined baking tray to cool completely.

4. To make the glaze, put the cream and chocolate into a medium saucepan and place over a low-medium heat, stirring regularly until the chocolate has melted and you have a smooth mixture. Set aside to cool for a few minutes
5. Pour the glaze over the cooled cake, trying to cover the entire surface. Allow the glaze to set before carefully transferring to a plate to serve.

*credits to "The Great British Bake-Off Christmas" for this yummy cake! *

Another recipe - for the children (and everyone else)

Gingerbread Biscuits

Makes about 20 biscuits

- 350g plain flour
- 2 teaspoons of ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda
- 100g butter or margarine
- 175g light brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 4 tablespoons of golden or maple syrup
- Large cookie cutter



1. Dip a paper towel in some margarine and rub it over 2 baking sheets. Turn on your oven to 190 c / 375 f, gas mark 5.

2. Sift the flour, ginger and bicarbonate of soda into a mixing bowl. Cut the butter or margarine into chunks and add them.
3. Rub the butter or margarine into the flour with your fingers, until the mixture looks like fine breadcrumbs.
4. Stir the sugar into the mixture. Break the egg into a small bowl. Add the syrup to the egg and beat them together well.
5. Stir the eggy mixture into the flour. Mix everything together with a metal spoon until it makes a dough.
6. Sprinkle a clean work surface with flour and put the dough onto it. Stretch the dough by pushing it away from you.
7. Fold the dough in half. Turn it and push it away from you again. Continue to push, turn and fold until the dough is smooth.
8. Cut the dough in half. Sprinkle a little more flour onto your work surface. Roll out the dough until it is about 5mm thick.
9. Use a cookie cutter to cut out lots of shapes from the dough. Lift the shapes onto the baking sheets with a fish slice.
10. Roll out the other half of the dough and cut shapes from it. Squeeze the scraps of dough to make a ball. Roll it out and cut more shapes.
11. Put the biscuits on the baking sheets into your oven and bake them for 12-15 minutes. They will turn golden brown.
12. Leave the biscuits on the sheets for about 5 minutes. Then, lift them onto a wire rack. Leave them to cool. When they have cooled, decorate them with lots of different sprinkles, coloured icing and silver balls to make them Christmassy!

credits to Usborne Cookery School: Cakes and Cookies for Beginners

More from the fifties...

Does anyone else remember getting a 'Smoker's Set' for Christmas? Sweetie cigarettes, a pipe, cigars etc in either chocolate or liquorice (liquorice was best!). Can you imagine the uproar that would cause nowadays? What about a painted soap in your stocking? Lady and the Tramp adorned our bathroom for months before anyone could bear to use them, and when they eventually went into the bath, we were covered in little bits of paint!



Christmas in my young days - wonderful memories from Hamish

I was born during the War and do not have any real memory of that time. The only one is of my father coming down through the fields in uniform and giving me a chocolate bar.

After the War, rationing was in place and not many folk had cars or telephones and no television. If my memory serves me right, it was in early 1950 before we got electricity.

My mother was the one for preparing and organising for Christmas. She would send Christmas cards to a large number of folk and was always looking for the postie to arrive to see what there was. I have been told that the postie delivered mail on Christmas day.

I remember well my mother tuning the radio and getting a German station to hear carols being sung. Of course, they came up with Silent Night, and many years afterwards I recall being with our son, Simon, in Germany attending a chapel service to hear the same carol being sung again.

Father would take home a bottle of sherry, port and whisky which Christmas, New Year and beyond - they must have had small glasses! Wine was unheard of.

One year, Mother took my brother Alistair and I out in a cold frosty night to show us the Christmas star. Also, another year, we walked from Lonbuie to Glaichbea - possibly 3 miles - on a clear frosty night with a bunch of holly for Mr and Mrs Tulloch, my uncle and aunt. Father would have been working away from home, but he picked us up later. The Tullochs always had a nice Christmas tree with real candles. Of course, my brother and I would write to Santa Claus and hang up Father's stockings as they were bigger than ours.

Mother would go off walking to the midnight mass at Chapel where all faiths were welcomed. Of course we were fast asleep

to get up early to see what Santa had left - Meccano, games such as Snakes and Ladders, a jigsaw puzzle or a book. Also there would be sweets and an apple and an orange.

Our Uncle Adam lived with us, and as Christmas Day was his birthday, so he got a combined Christmas/Birthday present. One year, he sent a chicken with a miniature of whisky inside the bird to his friend near Edinburgh. When the friend cooked it, there was a surprise when carving - he found the miniature which was still intact!

Dinner was just the household. No turkey - possibly a chicken. The sweet would be pineapple (tinned), jelly or trifle.

On Boxing Day, some of the neighbours would call with presents for my brother and I - the adults would have a refreshment. Mother taught us that it was just as important to give a present as to receive one and this has stuck in my mind.

The Christmas service in the church was well attended on the Sunday nearest Christmas and had a similar format as today with carols and readings. I am not sure if we had a Christmas tree, but we always sung 'Child in a Manger' as it had a Kiltarlity connection - it was translated from the Gaelic by Lachlan Macbean, a Kiltarlity man. It was many years after that when we started a Christmas Eve service.

Hamish Maclennan

The more you weigh the harder you are to kidnap. Stay safe and eat cake.

Try counting the angels.....



Sourced by Angie Dunn -

T'was the weeks before Christmas and all through the town
People wore masks to cover their frown.

The frown had begun way back in the spring
When the global pandemic changed everything.

They called it Corona but unlike the beer,
It didn't bring good times, it didn't bring cheer.

Contagious and deadly, this virus spread fast,
Like a wildfire that starts when fuelled by gas.

Airplanes were grounded. Travel was banned.
Borders were closed across sea and land.

As the world entered lockdown to flatten the curve,
The economy halted and folk lost their nerve.

From March to July we rode the first wave,
People stayed home and they tried to behave.

When summer emerged the lockdown was lifted,
But away from caution many folk drifted.

Now it's December and cases are spiking.
Wave two has arrived much to our disliking.

Frontline workers; doctors and nurses
Try to save people from riding in hearses.

This virus is awful. This COVID-19.
There isn't a cure, too early for vaccine.

It's true that this year has had sadness a plenty.
We'll never forget the year 2020.

And just round the corner, the holiday season.
But why be Merry? Is there even one reason?

To decorate the house and put up a tree
When no one will see it, no one but me.

But outside my window, the snow gently falls
And I think to myself 'Let's deck the halls!'

So I gather the ribbon, the garlands and bows.
As I play those great carols, my happiness grows.

Christmas isn't cancelled and neither is hope
If we lean on Our Father I know we can cope!

* I really don't mind getting older but my body is taking it
badly.*

A Wartime memory

In summer 1939 my Liverpudlian father, an engineer in the Merchant Navy, bought our home in Leek, a peaceful market town where my mother was born. His ship brought food and supplies across the Atlantic in convoys to the UK. I was 4 years old in 1939. I do not remember my Father ever being at home for Christmas. Christmas started in November making puddings and mincemeat but no lemons were available. My mother was very happy the day, years later, she could buy lemons again. My mother, sister and brother and I all helped with the weighing and stirring of the puddings and finally, making a wish with the last stir! Then Christmas Day, the most exciting day of the year! That lovely feeling of a heavy stocking at the foot of our beds! Our Christmas tree, dug up from the garden adorned with real candles clipped to its branches and when safe, lit with a match. Liverpool Uncle Alec came every Christmas and was in charge of roasting the sausages as Mother cooked the turkey. On Boxing Day we went to my Aunt and Uncle's big house 6 miles away, had more turkey dinner, found silver trinkets in the pudding! and played "Hide and Seek". One night when my Father was on leave, a German plane dropped a bomb over Leek. The sirens went off and my Father woke us and got us all down into our cellar - he carried me, fast asleep, and my head got a clout from one of the cellar's corners!

Barbara Wilton.



Count the stars - and the sheep!



My Childhood Christmas by John-Angus MacDonald (91 years young!)

As a child growing up in Skye, Christ was celebrated much as it is still. Lights and decorations would be hung up by our parents. The ladies of Staffin Highland Association held a party for the children of the Sunday schools of the island churches. On Christmas Eve, my four brothers, four sisters and I hung up our stockings for Father Christmas to call at our home.

On a little table, something for Father Christmas to eat and a half cup of tea would be set out to refresh him on his long journey through the night. As you may imagine, there were many excited and possibly noisy children to open their gifts on Christmas morning.

My brothers, sisters and I each had a bag of delicious things to eat and a toy then off to walk to church for the Christmas Day

service where we all enjoyed singing the carols. The children from the Free Church also walked to the joint service.

As a family we enjoyed games and reading. There was no Christmas broadcast from the king as only 3 houses in Staffin had a radio. Church services took place morning and evening on New Year's Day with attendance from all four denominations on the islands - Church of Scotland, Free Church, United Free Church and Free Presbyterian.

Time goes on but some traditions never change, thank God!



Vaccination Alert!

Who remembers polio?

We are lucky in this country with proper vaccination, but I think those of us who are older remember people being crippled with Polio, and the wee figure of a boy with his collecting box was a feature of our lives.



About 35 years ago, there was the start of an attempt to eliminate Polio from the world. Named PolioPlus, it was spear-headed and initially funded by Rotary - an international club for men and women which exists for friendship, service and fund-raising.

A few years ago, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Microsoft) offered to match anything Rotary raised dollar for dollar. Lately, they have raised that to two dollars. This November, Harry Gow, our local bakers, has been selling cupcakes with a nice purple flower on them to support the cause on behalf of Rotary. Over £4000 was raised which translates into £13000 with the Gates 'top-up'.

Why am I talking about this? Well, I have heard several people saying they won't be vaccinated for Covid 19. Polio is very nearly vanquished. The only reason it has not happened yet is the reluctance of some people to allow children to be vaccinated. For example, ISIS put out a rumour that the Polio vaccination causes infertility.

Some people feel the Covid vaccine has been rushed. Do vaccines not take 10 years? Yes they do, but only because they are developed by private companies, money and grants have to be raised (a 5 or 6 years struggle), testing has to be organised and bureaucracy managed. For Covid, the scenario is likened to a trip across London at rush hour. For the Covid vaccine, it has been 'traffic free and all lights at green'. All nations have thrown everything at it to get the job done.

With Polio, in areas of the world with poor record-keeping, children have their pinkies dipped in a purple dye to show they have had the vaccine - 'Purple for Polio'. I'm not suggesting we should do something the same for Covid.

Actually, not a bad idea.....

Sheila Moir



Young Life International



Even with all the current regulations, Young Life International ministry is able to meet safely and legally with young people. Here are some of the highlights from the last term:

- Laura & Margo have faithfully continued to minister to young girls in the Kiltarlity village.
- Markus, Ray, & Pauline have hosted ministry events in Kirkhill with up to 20 young people.
- Richard and Kate continue to spend time with Kiltarlity teens and share the Gospel with them.

- The local committee is very supportive and has helped with logistical details to ensure the activities mentioned above run smoothly.
- Local folks have generously donated funds to ensure ministry continues.

Thank you to the Kiltarlity Church of Scotland for opening up your building and providing a space for Young Life International. It has enabled the ministry to grow in this difficult time!

Merry Christmas

Richard Dahl

More thoughts on Christmas

Christmas time has in my adult married life been a time of tension of two very different ideas and experiences of Christmas I grew up in Nepal and with it being a Hindu nation they did not celebrate Christmas. There was no Christmas holidays, Santa or snow except the snow on the mountains seen in the distance and a huge poinsettia growing in our garden. The Nepali church we were part of would have organised a ' Christmas church picnic' which involved taking along a goat which became a goat stew with rice, lentils all eaten with no utensils and on a plate made of leaves. Where I lived was very remote and we had no electricity or running water but I loved it so much. Christmas was not a huge affair but we learnt about the birth of Jesus and the hope He brings. Christmas presents as a child usually consisted of pencils, glass bangles, hairband, notebook and chewing gum. The best Christmas I remember was when my two uncles came to visit us just before Christmas and left us gifts such as a watch with a

spring like strap, a battery run game, windup torch and lots of other bits and pieces.

When my parents returned to Northern Ireland, Christmas changed as I was 10 years old now and the country seemed to go mad about Christmas with every TV programme having Santa on it and decorations everywhere. Christmas morning we would open a pillow case with presents. I always got a toffee crisp, some sort of stationary, sellotape dispenser and oranges. It was more than we got in Nepal, but as a teenager my presents never amounted to what my friends got. My Nanny (my dad's mum) always gave us £20 and when friends asked what I got for Christmas I would say money and bits and pieces. They never asked how much as they probably presumed I got about £100 like them. At 10am we would, as a family walk to church as it was 3 doors down from us. It was a quick service and then we would head home with at least two people who had no family and my grandparents. After church we would open our presents from family and then play games, help out and then have a big family meal. We would then go for a walk round the local park and back home for more food and maybe a movie.

When I married things changed as you marry into a different family with a different way of doing Christmas. Ray's parents had not grown up with much and made a big effort at Christmas to give their kids big presents. They love to give a lot of presents and you will probably never see such a decorated house as Ray's parents. So this is where the tension appears as the children love the singing Santa's, a pile of presents the height of themselves,

food and sweets to last several months. BUT where is Jesus the saviour of the world and our only hope.

As a parent I know family time is precious but it is even more precious that our children are part of God's family. Things of the world will always try to lure us into a false sense of happiness and contentment. Unfortunately all the things in the world cannot fit into the special place in everyone's heart that is meant for Jesus. He is the reason for this season and He has asked us to be His hands and feet. Teaching our children by example is one of our greatest examples of Jesus today. What would Jesus do if He was here now and who would He help? This is a challenge for all of us but I pray we make time for those who need the love of Jesus in whatever way you do it.

May you all have a wonderful Christmas and God bless.

Pauline Gault

Christmas lunch



In my family, Christmas lunch was rounded off with a cloutie dumpling. This was lifted out of the big stock pot with the wooden laundry tongs and contained little silver charms and sixpences wrapped in greaseproof paper. The charms were saved for the next year, but we were allowed to keep the sixpences!

And a last look into the past -

I was born just after the outbreak of WW2. My earliest memories of Christmas were of the build-up of excitement, and hope. My sister and I were well warned "be good or Santa may not come". We toed the line just in case. We helped in the house, we ate ALL the food that was presented on our plate, we didn't dare say we didn't like

We dutifully went to bed early on Christmas Eve, having ensured that empty stockings (father's large and wide kilt socks) were safely laid at the foot of our beds. And, if my memory serves me right we went straight to sleep. But, in true tradition (and I suspect is still the case) we awoke in the middle of the night, to see if Santa had been. I often wondered how Santa managed to get down the chimney, through the living room, up a somewhat creaky staircase, into our "nursery" (our childhood bedroom was always known as such) and filled stockings. And what did we find therein always an orange, a silver sixpence, a sweetie, a notebook together with a pencil and rubber, and a toy sticking out of the top. We contented ourselves with these gifts till we had had a family breakfast, in the kitchen, followed by a good scrub up in cold water, whilst mother lit the fire in the lounge and finally, we were allowed in to the front room which was dominated by a real Christmas tree festooned with white fairy lights and homemade decorations. Magic. Santa had left presents for all the family. We always got one "big" present and a few additional bits and pieces. And the reason for the notebook, pencil and rubber became clear, we HAD to note down what we

had received and from whom, so we could accurately write the expected thank you letters.

Wonderful days gone by, yet not really gone by. I know children still experience that same magical expectation and excitement. But in those far-off days, I seem to recall we expected little and were very happy to enjoy what was given and during the war years many gifts were home produced. We were brought up to believe it is more blessed to give than to receive. In today's world, Christmas has become so very materialistic, the true meaning of this wondrous season has been lost in heaps of paper, tinsel, glitter and glamour. How can we encourage recognition of the best of the season, the very best being the gift of God's son Jesus, to whom the very first Christmas gifts were presented, in a humble stable bereft of all present day glitter and materialism.

I pray that this year, the year of Covid and all the restrictions and constraints imposed on us will offer all of us opportunity to reflect of that very first Christmas over 2000 years ago, and in addition to reach out with that news to others around.

Ellenor Thomas

