Magazine

No. 214 December 2026

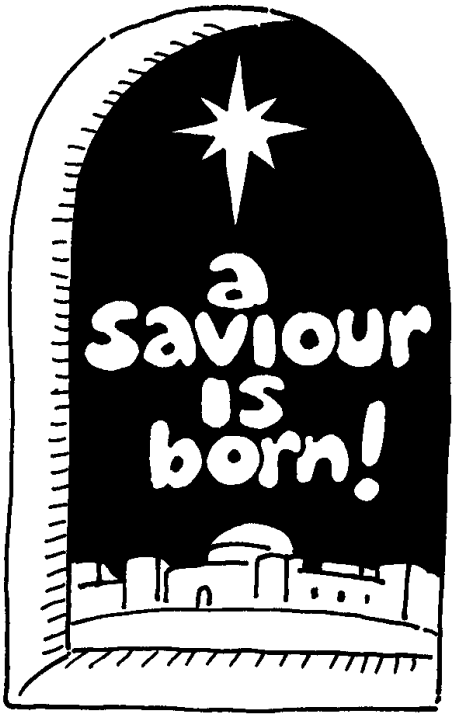
Dear Friends

On 15 December I have been invited to address the Scottish Parliament at its Time for Reflection. All those MSPs, and civil servants! What to say? You are allowed 400 words in which to do it. All those elected individuals, voted in by you and me and the rest of the country, representing a wide range of political, economic and religious beliefs (and none). There is your moment - to get to tell them what you really think, and what you really want, and what you really expect. And no swear words, and you are not allowed to make political points!

Analysing the results of the recent US mid-term elections, I have been struck by the number of people who feel that after two years of what some are describing as the most disastrous US presidency of all time, the feeling of hope and possibility has come back. I don't know that there has been a political shift in the American voters, but they have taken this opportunity to express their views about all politics, and stated, overwhelmingly, what they hope for and expect. The salvaging of decency.

The American writer Ursula K Le Guin wrote in 2014: *"In our fear-stricken society and its obsessive technologies to other ways of being…its power seems inescapable… the greed and power of billionaires rule society…they think their reign will last forever, but it will only last until the people rise up and change it."*

The coming of the Christ-Child of Bethlehem gives hope to those who wish to continue to evolve and change the society within which we live. It is a constant effort and struggle. It is the work of many lifetimes and stretches across millennia. The human capacity for greed and cruelty and selfishness constantly adapts. But at every turn, the hope of the Christ-Child; at every turn, the persistence of the Christ-Child; at every turn, the possibility of the Christ-Child; at every turn, the light of the Christ-Child.



Maybe that should be my message to the Scottish Parliament. But why draw the line there? Maybe that should be my message to our Church and our community.

May the hope, the persistence, the possibility and the light of the Christ-Child be yours this coming Christmas, and in the New Year that is to come.

Very Revd Dr Derek Browning

WORSHIP NOTES

Advent

The first Sunday of Advent is on 29 November, when we take time to reflect about the coming of Jesus into the world, and what this means to us today.



Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

We share communion in Church at 9.30am and 10.30am on **Sunday 6 December**. At the 10.30am service, if anyone wishes to receive the wine of communion from the Common Cup, please join the Minister at the small table situated near the vestibule door.

SERVICES AND EVENTS OVER CHRISTMAS 2026 AND THE NEW YEAR 2027

11 - 20 December: **Christmas Tree Festival** - opening at 4pm on Friday 11 December.

13 December: *No 9.30am service.*

10.30am All Age service led by the Sunday Club.

Christmas Treats in the St Matthew Hall after the 10.30am service. Please remember to give generously.

After this service we will require help to remove church chairs in preparation for the South Morningside Primary School service in the following days.

16 December: **Telephone Choir carol singalong, 7.30pm, in the Church**

Donations go towards supporting the Wednesday Disabled Club.

20 December: 9.30am Early Service (Cluny Hall)

10.30am Traditional Service of Lessons and Carols

3.00 pm Blue Christmas Service in the Church
(more detail on page 4)

A half hour service for those who find this time of year difficult or sad.

Refreshments served in the St Matthew Hall afterward.



24 December: **Christmas Eve 6.30pm All age service**

Carols by Candlelight from 11.00pm

Watchnight Service from 11.30pm

This year our retiring offerings will support the two Church Charities:

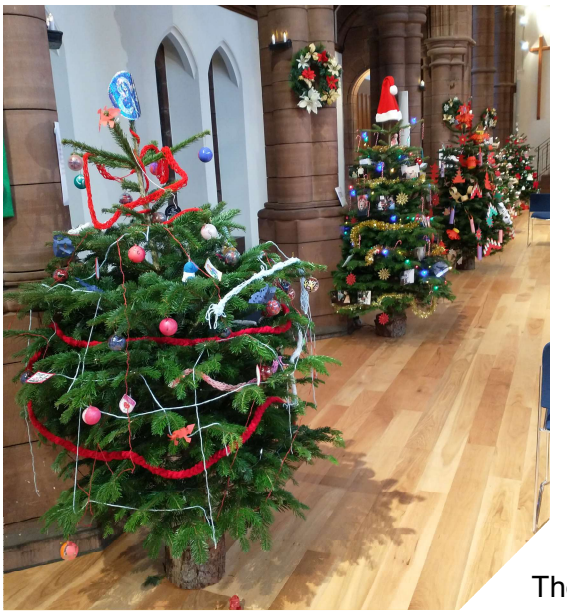
The David Nott Foundation

Training doctors and medical staff working globally in areas of catastrophe conflict. Currently working in Libya, Somaliland, Sudan, South Sudan, Moldova, Ukraine, Iraq, Palestine, Syria and Yemen.

Edinburgh Clothing Store

The Edinburgh Clothing Store (ECS) is a charity run by volunteers, offering clothing, shoes, bedding, curtains and towels for people in genuine need such as individuals and families who are on low income, or vulnerable through personal circumstances. It's a free service made possible by volunteers and donations. The ECS is run totally by volunteers and with over 1,500 people referred to the service annually, donations of money and good quality clothing, bedding and towels are greatly appreciated.

25 December:	**Christmas Day service 10am**
27 December:	*No 9.30am service*
	10.30am Morning Worship *(no tea and coffee after the service)*
3 January 2027:	**Epiphany 9.30am & 10.30am services resume** *(Tea and coffee resumes)*



CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL
11 – 20 DECEMBER 2026

We are again having our Tree Festival. Entry by donation and there will also be a raffle.

It starts on Friday 11 December when a young piper will open the event at 4 pm. At 5.30 on that evening we'll have our new Morningside Youth Choir perform. The event will end at 7.30 pm.

On Saturday 12 the Festival opens at 10 am when we will have our popular craft stall. Refreshments are in the Braid Hall 10 - 12. We hope to have more musical entertainment and the event ends at 2 pm.

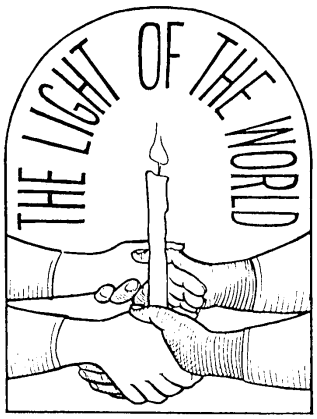
The Festival will continue on Monday 14, 10 - 12 and again on Wednesday 16, 10 - 12. The regular coffee morning will be held as usual that morning. The trees will then stay up until after the service on December 20.

New participants this year are South Edinburgh Food Bank and Fresh Start: two organisations that we have supported for many years. The third newcomer is our recently formed Kirk Krafters who decorated the church (and the local pillar box) so beautifully on Remembrance Sunday.

Again, William Purves is sponsoring the event and again all money raised will go to charity. This year, the charity is our own church - to augment the wonderful total achieved by the Umbrella Festival and help pay for vital work on our roof so that we can continue to serve our appreciative community.

Issie Paterson

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE 20 December, 3pm in the Church



Many find the annual landmark of Christmas a difficult one to negotiate after a bereavement. Not just the first Christmas 'without…' but each year the season often highlights the absence. Many churches host a 'Blue Christmas' service. Our practice has been to hold a half-hour afternoon service on the Sunday nearest Christmas. Dimmed lights, Church decorated, and chairs placed in our chancel area near the communion table. I conduct a short service and talk about why Christmas can be a difficult time and it being hard for people to be happy at that time of year, and to mean it.

In truth it has never been the most wonderful time of the year. Certainly not in the days surrounding the first Christmas. The story of Jesus' birth is not to be told with a jolly voice and a ho-ho-ho. It is the story of a light sent to shine in the darkness, which the world snuffed out. It is the story of God's never-ending mercy, which was rejected. We cannot come to the manger without acknowledging that it lies in the shadow of the cross.

And yet, if we remember the real story: Mary was alone and afraid, but God remained with her and lifted her up among women. Joseph was disgraced, but God revealed in that disgrace a plan to save the world. The world was in darkness, but God sent the light of life to shine. We are not alone, for in Jesus Immanuel, God is with us. The people rejected God, but God still embraces us.

During the service we invite people to write the names of a loved one they are missing, or a situation that is grieving them, on a pre-cut and ribboned cardboard star. These are then hung on a twig-branch Remembering Tree which is left up in Church over the Christmas season. The tree is used by others outwith the Blue Christmas service by those attending other Church services - a gentle way to remember at Christmas, to recognize loss, but also to give thanks. After the Blue Christmas service, each person is given a white rose to take home, and we also have refreshments in the hall, where many share their experiences of the last year, or choose to talk about anything other than the bereavement. It is a poignant and gentle but unforced time.



There is a sense of sadness, of course, but also a sense that meeting in the Church, whether the mourners come from a faith background or not, and whether there was a Church funeral or not, there is a sense of being *held* in sanctuary, where something gentle and intimate can happen.

There is a powerful sense of God's Spirit at work. And for that, we give thanks.

CHRISTMAS TREATS - Sunday 13 December

Come through to the St Matthew Hall after the 10.30am service and join us for some mulled wine and festive fare. Coffee and tea is also on offer for those who are driving as the mulled wine does contain alcohol.

Please make an appropriate donation towards our costs.

We look forward to seeing you all there.



EDINBURGH TELEPHONE CHOIR –
Wednesday 16 December, 7.30pm

You are warmly invited to join us for the annual event of an evening of carols and choir singing, led by Edinburgh Telephone Choir. We will be joined by the Wednesday Club, and there will be a retiring collection to support their work.

CHRISTMAS WISH LIST



As a child, I wrote letters to Santa,
Requesting great mountains of stuff.
Tho' I'd plenty of toys in my toy-box
And already had more than enough.

But one year it seemed better to ask him,
Not for annuals, or games that were new
But simply to come to the rescue,
With a tube of the very best glue.

For I knew I was clumsy and awkward.
And sometimes destructive and cross;
And my toys would get battered or broken;
Parts of jigsaw and games would get lost.

I hoped Santa's helpers could fix them,
Neat-fingered and patient and clean.
I was far too slap-dash to repair things,
Or restore them to what they had been.

I'm once more in need of a mender,
Who can set right disorder untold;
Who can heal all relationships splintered
And bring warmth to all hearts that grow cold.

The Christ Child grew up in a workshop
And mastered the carpenter's trade;
He can mend, he can heal, he can pardon.
And repair all the mischief we've made.

His hands can be probing or gentle,
His methods be patient or crude;
To bridge all that divides us from heaven
He takes nails and two pieces of wood.

JWMC

FLOWER LIST



The flowers in December and January have been donated and will be arranged as follows:-

		Donated by	Arranged by
December	6	Evelyn & George McHollan	Irene Wilson
	13	CHRISTMAS	Flower Committee
	20	CHRISTMAS	Flower Committee
	27	CHRISTMAS	Flower Committee
January	3	CHRISTMAS	Flower Committee
	10	Alison Calder	Karen Keil
	17	Frances Bruce	Moira Forsyth
	24	Lorna Wilson	Irene Wilson
	31	Euan Murray	Marjory Watson

The new flower list for 2027 is now available on the vestibule noticeboard and is filling up quickly. If you would like to supply flowers one Sunday, please put your name and phone number against your chosen date. The cost remains at £45. Cheques should be made payable to 'Morningside Parish Church Flower Fund' or payment can be made by bank transfer if preferred. If you are a UK taxpayer and can give by Gift Aid, please fill in a Gift Aid envelope or advise me if you are registered with the Gift Aid Convener. Monies can be given to a member of the Committee, put in the Flower Committee pigeon hole or sent to the church office clearly marked for the Flower Fund. Please contact me direct on 0131 449 2866 or e-mail: irene_a_wilson@btinternet.com if you require details to make a bank transfer.



Do you have a talent for, or would like to try, flower arranging? We are always delighted to welcome new members to our team. Men are also most welcome - you can serve coffee so I'm sure you could arrange flowers too. Even if you are only available a few weeks a year it would help.

If you would like to find out more, please come and speak to me or any other member of the Flower Committee on a Sunday morning. Training and guidance can be given if required.

Irene Wilson, Convener - Flower Committee



KIRK SESSION NEWS

The Kirk Session met in November and discussed the following**:**

Pastoral - Doreen Reekie, Pastoral Convenor reported that we have nine visitors in our pastoral visiting group visiting ten members of the congregation. Five welcome packs have been delivered to new members of the congregation.

Doreen announced that she would be standing down as Pastoral Convener after many years of committed service. Laura Shaw has agreed to become the new convener. On behalf of the Kirk Session and congregation the Moderator thanked Doreen for her hard and much appreciated work.

Pastoral Assistant: Jacqui Lindsay reported that Emily Macfarlane, who worked with Morningside Hope in the Summer, has continued on into the Autumn, helping with the Heart for Art Group. She is proving a great asset to the group.

Jacqui expressed her thanks to David Mitchell who decided that the retiring offering for Lyn Mitchell's funeral should be given to the work of Morningside Hope. Lyn was a strong supporter of Morningside Hope's work. Over £1,000 was donated. There has also been a further anonymous donation of £1,000 which, when Gift Aided, becomes £1,250.

Presbytery Elder: Robin Stimpson reported that Presbytery met on 3 November. There was a full agenda which was dealt with quickly and efficiently. It included the presentation to Presbytery of candidates at various stages of training for ministry, and it was good to see Janet Shepherd, our Probationer, included in the roll call.

St John's Colinton Mains has moved! From the Presbytery Mission plan district in which we are included, it has moved to a neighbouring district which made more geographical sense.

Presbytery's assessment of the levy to cover the Presbytery's costs for 2027 is a total of £103,223. Our assessed share of this will be £2,245, based on an income of £224,491. Our contribution towards ***Giving to Grow*** (the national fund that supports all the national Church's work) will be £117,332.



ROLL CHANGES

Please remember in your prayers the family and friends of

Douglas Ross, who died on 25 October 2026.

Morningside Hope

REMAINING DATES for 2026

There will be no groups during the weeks of 21 & 28 December, restarting Tuesday 6 January.

HEART FOR ART: Held every Tuesday in the St Matthew Hall, 11- 1pm

MUSIC AND MEMORIES IN MORNINGSIDE Held in the Cluny Hall 2- 4pm

Mondays 7 (Christmas Party) and 21 December

GENTLE EXERCISE CLASSES dementia friendly but open to all 60+

Held in the St Matthew Hall, Monday 14 December (Christmas Party) 2-4pm

GAMES AFTERNOON: open to everyone, these afternoons are a chance to meet up with friends old and new, play our favourite board games, jigsaws etc. and have a coffee and catch up.

Wednesday 16 December (Christmas Party) 2-4pm

DATES for 2027

HEART FOR ART: workshops for those with dementia and their partners/carers

Held every **Tuesday in** the St Matthew Hall, from 5 January onwards 11- 1pm

Annual Art Exhibition: Saturday 25 September

MUSIC AND MEMORIES IN MORNINGSIDE: workshops for those with dementia and their partners/carers

Held on 1st and 3rd **Mondays** in the month (except January), 2- 4pm in the Cluny Hall

January:	11 & 18	**February:**	1 & 15
March:	1 & 15	**April:**	5 & 19
May:	3 & 17	**June:**	7 & 21
July:	5 & 19	**August:**	2 & 16
September:	6 & 20	**October:**	4 & 18
November:	1 & 15	**December:**	6 *(Christmas Party)* & 20

GENTLE EXERCISE CLASSES: dementia friendly but **open to all 60+**
The class will last 40-45 minutes, followed by tea, coffee and the chance to chat.

Held on 2nd and 4th **Mondays,** 2-4pm in the church itself

January:	11 & 25	**February:**	8 & 22
March:	8 & 22 (*29 March is Easter Monday*)	**April:**	12 & 26
May:	10 & 24	**June:**	14 & 28
	No classes in July or August		
September:	13 & 27	**October:**	11 & 25
November:	8 & 22	**December:**	13 (Christmas Party)

GAMES AFTERNOON: open to **everyone**, these afternoons are a chance to meet up with friends old and new, play our favourite board games, jigsaws etc. and have a coffee and catch up.

Held once a month on a **Wednesday** afternoon, 2-4pm

January:	20	**February:**	17
March:	17	**April:**	14
May:	19	**June:**	16
	No games in July or August		
September:	15	**October:**	20
November:	17	**December:**	15 (Christmas Party)

ANIMAL AFTERNOONS:

Tuesday 27 April Therapy ponies 2- 4pm. The ponies will be with us 2 – 3.30pm, teas and coffees served from 3pm

DEMENTIA FRIENDLY CONCERTS: We offer four dementia-friendly concerts a year. Open to everyone, this will be a varied programme. Each concert lasts 40 – 45mins and is followed by teas and coffees.



Saturday 6 March, 2pm	Edinburgh Mandolin and Guitar Orchestra
Saturday 22 May, 2pm	Brass Quintet
Saturday 25 September, 2pm	Heart Strings
Saturday 27 November, 2pm	George Heriot's Chamber Choir

TALK: Monday 31 May at 2pm. **"Robert Louis Stevenson - Travel, Health & other Ephemera"** presented by Dr Jon Cossar

PLAYLIST FOR LIFE

Over two decades of scientific research has shown that listening to a personal playlist can improve the lives of people living with dementia. Our trained volunteers can support you to create a personalised playlist that can help • reduce anxiety • improve your mood • make difficult tasks more manageable • evoke memories that can help families and carers connect. For more information or to make an appointment, please contact Jacqui on the number or email below.

PLAYLIST FOR LIFE TRAINING: Friday 25 June 10 – 4pm

This interactive course explains the benefits of using personalised playlists to support people living with dementia and helps you to learn how to integrate these playlists into people's daily lives.

PASTORAL SKILLS COURSE: an Introduction: over two evenings, Tuesdays 16 and 23 March

Caring for one another is the responsibility of each and every one of us and so we are offering a brief introduction to Pastoral Skills running from 6 –9.30pm each evening, hopefully starting with a light supper.

There is a maximum of 16 places on the course. **It is open to anyone** interested in finding out a bit more about pastoral care, without the necessity of making any commitment beyond the course itself.

The course will look at topics such as:

- Communication & listening skills.
- Self-awareness & self-care
- Boundaries and why they matter.
- Dementia

The training will be hands on/experiential in nature and the aim, to make it an enjoyable experience for those attending. There is no charge for the training and CPD certificates will be provided.

PASTORAL SKILLS COURSE, PART 2: over two evenings**,** Tuesdays 19 & 26 October.

Open to those who have completed the introductory course above and want to further develop their skills and knowledge. Specialist subject for level two will be bereavement.

The Church also offers a **Coffee Morning** every Wednesday, 10 – 11.30am – all welcome!

Interested in attending? Please come along to any of the above, you will be made most welcome. Interested in volunteering? If you would like to help with any of these activities, please get in touch. Or simply interested in finding out a little bit more, just contact our Pastoral Assistant Jacqui Lindsay on 07834 364 628 or e mail: pastoralassistant@morningsideparishchurch.org.uk

OUR PASTORAL CONVENOR RETIRES

After nigh on 25 years, Doreen Reekie is stepping down as Pastoral Convenor. As part of her role, she has led the pastoral visitors' team faithfully, supporting new team members, matching them with visitees, often visiting with them to offer introductions whilst visiting a goodly number of folks herself over all those years. Alongside this, Doreen has distributed the Welcome Packs to new church members and reported back to Kirk Session twice a year.

As part of her last meeting as Convenor, Doreen was presented with a large card and some small gifts as tokens of the whole team's love and appreciation.

She is seen in the photo here with our new Pastoral Convenor, Laura Shaw.





KIRK KRAFTERS

Kirk Krafters would like to thank all those who have participated throughout the year with various projects for the church and the community.

There will be no meeting in December but if anyone wishes to assist in the decorating of our Christmas Tree for the Festival come along on Tuesday 8 December at 11am in the Church.

On Tuesday 26 January we will be meeting once again in the afternoon from 2-4pm in the Cluny Hall. We hope to introduce another craft - come along to find what craft is being done. Cost £5.

From February we will return to our evening meetings but please note that we are changing the day to a ***Monday*** starting on 22 February from 7-9pm in the Cluny Hall.

If anyone knows of a craft that they wish to try or someone who can guide us in a craft, please let the team know. Thanks to Helen for coming along as a guest crafter for our November afternoon.

Further information from Catriona 07929 866669; Morag 07977 190536 or Rona 07929 830112

FEBRUARY MAGAZINE

Material for the February issue of the magazine should be with the editor, Alison Riddell, by **Friday 15 January** and it will be available by **Sunday 31 January**. Contributions should be emailed to editor@morningsideparishchurch.org.uk or put in her pigeonhole at the church.

Please note that there is no magazine in January.

I Saw a Stable
by Mary Elizabeth Coleridge

I saw a stable, low and very bare,
A little child in a manger.
The oxen knew Him, had Him in their care,
To men He was a stranger.
The safety of the world was lying there,
And the world's danger.



Christmas Blessings To All Readers!

Minister: Very Rev Dr Derek Browning	447 1617	derek.browning@churchofscotland.org.uk
Pastoral Assistant: Jacqui Lindsay	07834 364 628	pastoralassistant@morningsideparishchurch.org.uk
Magazine Editor: Alison Riddell	445 2330	editor@morningsideparishchurch.org.uk
Church Administrator: Gail Burns	447 6745	office@morningsideparishchurch.org.uk

www.morningsideparishchurch.org.uk