

Muckairn Parish Church



Christmas

2023





From the Editor....

Well, here we are again, the Autumn leaves have fallen and the shops are stacked high with pretty decorations, delicious provisions and beautiful gifts. Traditional carols and Christmas music fill the air and children in schools are busy cutting, gluing and making merry pictures and cards, along with learning lines, dances and songs for their Christmas Nativities and Festive plays.

Throughout time, people across the world have embraced with joy and energy a chance to celebrate. No matter what their chosen religion or beliefs or non-beliefs, people look forward to celebrations that bring hope, love, friendship and family together, especially if it also involves food! No wonder it is my favourite time of year.

In a world where sorrow, hatred, cruelty and evil is more dominant in the news, it is no wonder that people welcome the chance to celebrate joy, kindness, peace and love. There are always those around who enjoy nothing more than trying to dampen our enthusiasm but along with Dickens and the converted Scrooge "*I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year.*"

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this edition, with a special thank you to Lorna in the Post Office for her help all through the year.

I send you our warmest Christmas Wishes and may kindness, hope, love and joy surround you this Christmas time and throughout 2024.

Katherine Blyth



In Memoriam by Alfred Lord Tennyson

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.



Minister's Musing

For me, the poetry of Madeleine L'Engle best captures the paradoxical nature of Christmas and Advent. In a previous Christmas magazine, I shared the poem, "the Risk of Birth," which continues to be my favourite Christmas Poem

*This is no time for a child to be born,
With the earth betrayed by war & hate
And a comet slashing the sky to warn
That time runs out & the sun burns late.*

*That was no time for a child to be born,
In a land in the crushing grip of Rome;
Honour & truth were trampled by scorn —
Yet here did the Saviour make his home.*

*When is the time for love to be born?
The inn is full on the planet earth,
And by a comet the sky is torn —
Yet Love still takes the risk of birth.*

Darryl Tippens is in alignment with me in his appreciation of Madeleine L'Engle's help in appreciating Christmas more deeply. He writes in his blog,

Her understanding that divine love can heal life's sorrows is apparent in her understanding of Advent and Christmas. In the tradition of the biblical prophets and the birth narratives of Jesus, L'Engle recognized a double-edged, bittersweet quality in Advent and Christmas. Sorrow and joy are not opposite, but related threads in the story. Christmas joy is best understood against the backdrop of Israel's sorrow and longing. After all, glad tidings are brought to people in need, not to the complacent and self-satisfied.

Some of the finest carols make the point that the Christ Child arrives at a particularly dark time: "In the bleak mid-winter,

frosty wind made moan, earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone" (Christina Rossetti).

Joseph and Mary's homeland, we recall, was occupied by a brutal empire. Danger lurked. There is no room in the inn. The Christmas manger gives way to the holy family fleeing like refugees to escape a murderous tyrant.

Thus, we come to know that God acts when things are bad, not waiting until all is cleaned up and ready - as Madeleine L'Engle's poem "First Coming" makes plain.

*He did not wait till the world was ready,
till men and nations were at peace.
He came when Heavens were unsteady,
and prisoners cried out for release.
He did not wait for the perfect time.
He came down when the need was deep and great.
He dined with sinners in all their grime,
turned water into wine. He did not wait
till hearts were pure. In joy he came
to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.
To a world like ours, of anguished shame
he came, and his Light would not go out.
He came to a world which did not mesh,
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh
the Maker of the stars was born.
We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,
He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!*

Yes, Rejoice! Rejoice! For in this world of sin, where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.

Rev Tom Telfer



Candles at Christmas

There is something lovely about the soft, gentle, flickering light of a candle. It's somehow reassuring and peaceful. And this year, according to the latest stylish Christmas magazines, it is the number one decoration to bring some 'Christmas Magic', especially when raised safely above, evergreen foliage foraged from forests or gardens.

Decorating with candles is not new. Yule candles, even before medieval times, were lit in Northern Europe and burned throughout the Christmas Festival to pay homage to the Sun God. By symbolically lighting the Yule candle it was hoped that the light of the sun would be encouraged to return before too long.

Christianity borrowed this custom and made it sacred in its own way. As Christ was 'The Light of the World', the flame of the candle symbolised his influence. It was also sometimes regarded as the light of the Star of Bethlehem.

People were encouraged to light as many candles as they could afford to reinforce this symbolism, and candles were often placed in windows and later fixed to Christmas trees.

In Germany, during the 18th Century, four hundred candles were considered suitable decoration for a 12 foot tree. This often led to disaster and tragedy with house fires resulting from the burning trees. To try to abate the problem, in more wealthy households, a servant was positioned by the tree with a wet sponge or mop fixed on the end of a long pole to douse any outbreak of fire.



In 1882 the US Edison Electrical Light Company began to market little electrical candle replicas, much to everyone's huge relief. This was followed, in the mid 1900's, by replacing the electrical candle lights with electrical stars, lanterns or flowered fairy lights. Later the trend turned to decorating trees and homes with 1,000s of tiny LED lights.

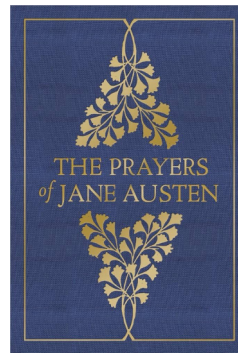
This year, however, the focus has returned to a more natural and environmentally mindful fashion, with the magical, peaceful quality of the humble candle, set to adorn many a Christmas mantelpiece, sideboard and table.

Isabel Blyth



On visiting Jane Austen's home at Chawton in Hampshire, I was pleased to purchase a small book containing three surviving prayers written by Jane. The following are extracts taken from these.

Editor



*Look with mercy on the sins we have this day committed,
and in mercy make us feel them deeply, that our repentance may be sincere, and our resolutions steadfast of endeavoring against the commission of such in future.*

*Give us a thankful sense of the blessings in which we live,
of the many comforts of our lot, that we may not deserve to lose them by discontent or indifference.*

Have mercy, O gracious Father, upon all that are now suffering from whatsoever cause, that are in any circumstance of danger or distress. Give them patience under every affliction, strengthen, comfort, and relieve them.



*For all whom we love and value, for every friend and connection,
we equally pray: however divided and far asunder, we know that we are alike before Thee, and under Thine eye.*

Incline us, O God, to think humbly of ourselves, to be severe only in the examination of our own conduct, to consider our fellow-creatures with kindness, and to judge of all they say and do with that charity which we would desire from them ourselves.

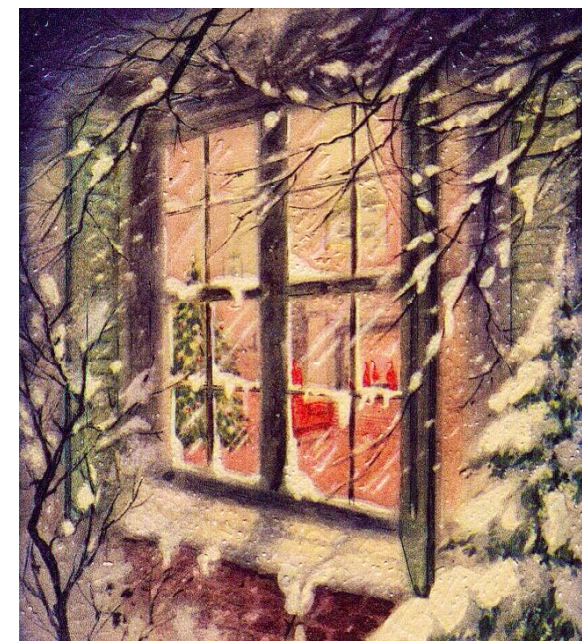




Give me Holly, Bold and Jolly

by Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)

A ROSE has thorns as well as honey,
I'll not have her for love or money;
An Iris grows so straight and fine
That she shall be no friend of mine;
Snowdrops like the snow would chill me;
Nightshade would caress and kill me;
Crocus like a spear would fright me;
Dragon's-mouth might bark or bite me;
Convolvulus but blooms to die;
A Wind-flower suggests a sigh;
Love-lies-bleeding makes me sad;
And Poppy-juice would drive me mad: –
But give me Holly, bold and jolly,
Honest, prickly, shining holly;
Pluck me holly leaf and berry
For the day when I make merry.



Missing you at Christmas

by Anon

It's Christmas once again
and even though you are not here
you are still remembered
at this festive time of year

For you have always played
a very warm and special part
with all the cheer and joy you shared
filling so many hearts

This year when singing carols
or hanging baubles on the tree
you'll be in every loving thought
and you always will be

The many silent tears
can all be gently wiped away
but all the love that's held for you
will forever, always stay



Christmas Giggles ...

How did Mary and Joseph know that Jesus was 7lb 6oz when he was born?
They had a weigh in a manger!

What do you call a man wearing trousers made of wrapping paper?
Russell!

How did Scrooge win the football game?
The Ghost of Christmas passed!

What carol is heard in the desert?
O camel ye faithful!

Why do penguins jump up and down when they meet each other?
To break the ice!

What did the fire-fighter's wife get for Christmas?
A ladder in her stocking!

What part of a turkey is musical?
The drumstick!

What kind of relationship did Mary and Joseph have?
A stable one!

How do you know when Santa is in the room?
You can sense his presents!

What do vampires sing on New Year's Eve?
Auld Fang Syne!

The First Snowflake

The first snowflake fell today
 and with any luck,
 more will follow.
 Billions and trillions of
 snowflakes would mean
 They'd have to cancel
 school tomorrow.
 Sterling Bradford



Peppermint Stick

I took a lick
 of a peppermint stick
 and oh it tasted yummy!
 It used to be
 on the Christmas tree
 But now it's in my tummy!
 Anonymous



When what to my wondering
 eyes should appear...
 But 10 extra pounds on my
 Hips, Thighs and Rear!
 Anonymous



Christmas Wishes.....

Thank you to everyone who made a donation to send their Christmas wishes this year.

*Merry Christmas to everyone and health and happiness for 2024.
Mary and Freddie Nicolson.*

*All good wishes for Christmas and New Year.
Margaret and Peter Harper.*

*May the joy of Christmas be with you all!
Tom and Jan Telfer.*

*Wishing Everyone a very Happy Christmas and a Good New Year.
Ann and Lawrence Scott.*

*Best Wishes for Christmas and 2024.
Deirdre MacFarlane.*

*Best wishes to all in Taynuilt and area for Christmas and the New Year.
Christine Allan.*

*Sending warm wishes for a very joyous Christmas and a healthy and happy New Year.
Isabel, Duncan and Katherine Blyth*



*To you All, Best wishes for Christmas and for that peace in your hearts that can spill out into the lives of others.
Andrew and Lucy Gray.*

*Sending warm Christmas Greetings to all friends and neighbours, and best wishes for a pleasant and peaceful New Year.
Brian Wilkinson.*

*Wishing all our family, friends and customers a very happy Christmas and a healthy New Year.
Best Wishes, John and Lorna MacIennan.*

*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.
Kathy Whelan.*

*All the best for Christmas and New Year, from
Rosemary Carswell.*

*Wishing everyone a Happy Christmas and a peaceful year in 2024.
Mary Scott.*

*A very happy Christmas and good New Year.
Love Alison Pringle.*





*We wish you all a peaceful Christmas and New Year.
Sara, Alexandra and Roy Rutherford.*

*Wishing everyone a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.
Dolly Harrison.*

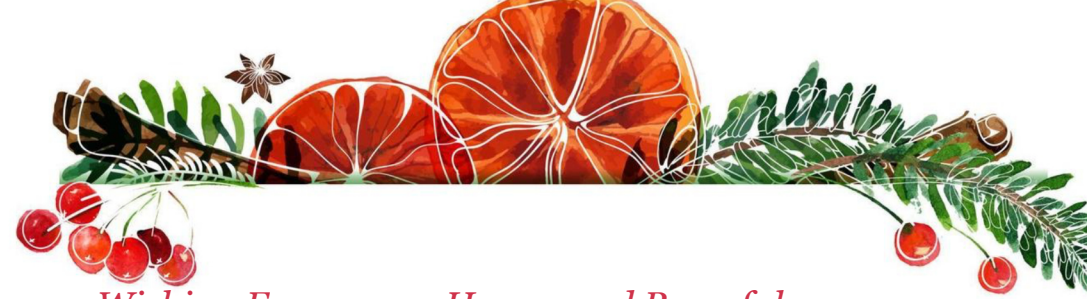
*Wishing all friends and neighbours a very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year.
Donald and Janice Harrison.*

*Wishing everyone a Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.
Ann Sutherland and Family.*

*Wishing everyone a Christmas full of joy and a New Year full of hope.
Jo and Maclain.*

*We wish you a Merry Christmas with happiness and peace to all in the new year.
Campbell and Florence.*

*Wishing you all a Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.
Michael G. Kidd.*



*Wishing Everyone a Happy and Peaceful Christmas and Best Wishes for 2024.
Ronnie and Shona Neil.*



thank you

Grateful thanks to all who contributed to the flower fund throughout the year. Special thanks to Rosemary Carswell for doing the flowers for so many months of the year and to Deirdre Macfarlane who covers July. We are still hoping that others will help so that the load can be spread.

Huge thanks to Gavin Carswell, our super elf who so willingly puts up our Christmas tree each year.

Mary Nicolson, 01866 822 677.

Thanks also to Freddy Nicolson for supplying Stanley Clarke's tub outside the church supplied with flowering plants.

Mary Scott





1. How many presents in total were given in 'The 12 Days of Christmas'?
2. Name the famous Christmas ballet?
3. What is Frosty the Snowman's nose made of?
4. How many candles should go on an advent wreath?
5. In what year was 'A Christmas Carol' by Charles Dickens published?
a) 1799 b) 1801 c) 1837 d) 1843
6. What is the name of Scrooge's dead business partner?
7. Which continent does Christmas dinner favourite, the turkey, originate from?
8. One of the most popular Christmas toys of 1971, who or what, 'wobble but don't fall down'?
9. If you were born on Christmas Day, what's your star sign?

10. The most popular toy of 1980 was actually designed by a professor of architecture in Budapest to teach his students about spatial awareness. What is it called?
11. Which UK monarch delivered the first Christmas Broadcast to the BBC in 1932?
12. Which country is the largest exporter of Christmas trees?
13. What is the chemical formula of snow?
14. What Christmas item takes its name from the old French word 'estincelle' meaning spark?
15. Postmen in Victorian England were commonly called what?
16. Balsam, Douglas, Fraser, and Noble are all types of what?
17. In which author's novel is it 'always winter but never Christmas'?
18. What do traditional Ukrainians put on their Christmas tree for good luck?
19. Which Christmas product did Sir Henry Cole produce in 1843?
20. Stars, needle, plate, dendrite, column, lacy, and capped column are the six main types of what?

Can you unscramble the Christmas Carols and Festive songs from the Anagrams below?

1. LABEL OF CHORTLES
2. THE CHALK SLED
3. HEALTHY THINLY DOVE
4. TRENDY GNOMES MERELY GREET
5. BELITTLED MERRY MOUTH
6. SOFTEN NOSY WARMTH
7. RICH SYMBOL DAY
8. THE GREEK WINS
9. NO FIT SHELTER
10. TINSEL THING
11. AH RECITES STORM
12. GREEN HIGHLAND SALT SHAKER

How many words can you make out of the letters in

CAROLLING

over 20 words - good
 over 40 words - excellent
 over 60 words - genius!!



“KID STUFF.”

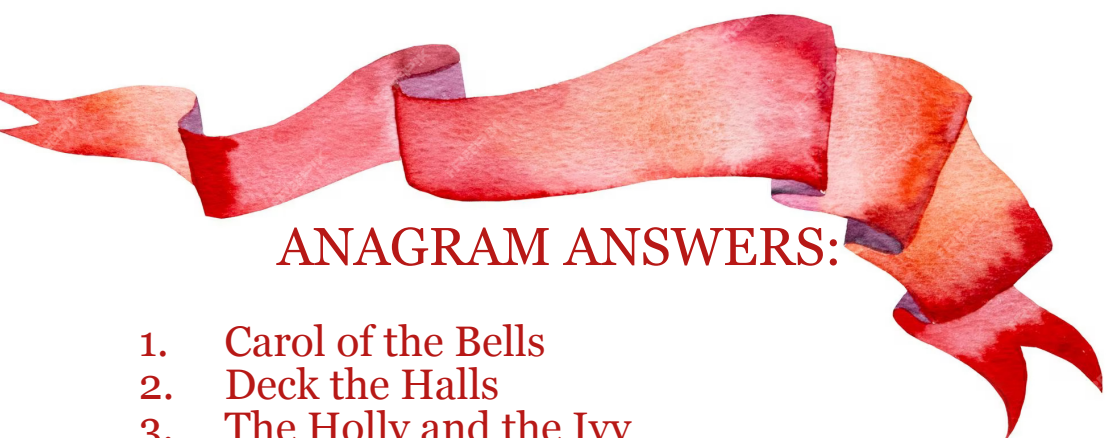
The wise guys
 tell me
 that Christmas
 is Kid Stuff
 Maybe they’ve got
 something there -
 Two thousand years ago
 three wise guys
 chased a star
 across a continent
 to bring
 frankincense and myrrh
 to a Kid
 born in a manger
 with an idea in his head
 And as the bombs
 crash
 all over the world today
 the real wise guys know
 that we’ve all got to go
 chasing stars
 again
 in the hope
 that we can get back
 some of that
 Kid Stuff
 born two thousand years ago.



Frank Horne. (1899-1974)

Frank Horne was a Harlem Renaissance poet and a US Government official. He wrote this poem in December 1942 and it seems somehow just as appropriate and fitting today.

Michael G. Kidd.

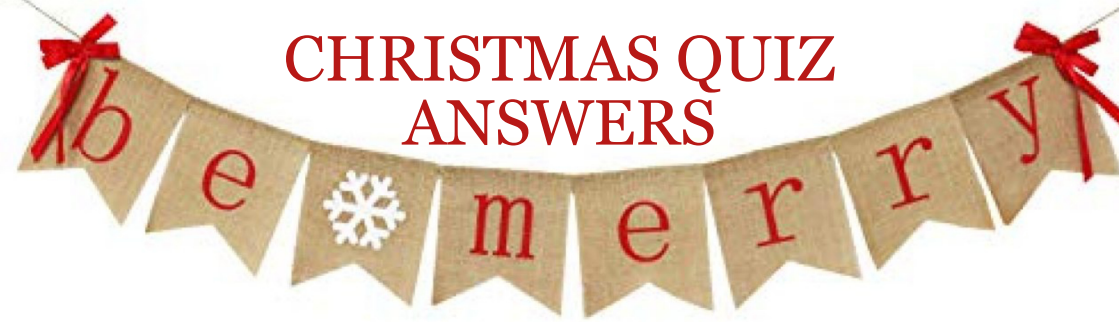


ANAGRAM ANSWERS:

1. Carol of the Bells
2. Deck the Halls
3. The Holly and the Ivy
4. God Rest ye Merry Gentlemen
5. The Little Drummer Boy
6. Frosty the Snowman
7. Mary's Boy Child
8. We Three Kings
9. The First Noel
10. Silent Night
11. O Christmas Tree
12. Hark the Herald Angels Sing



CHRISTMAS QUIZ ANSWERS



1. 364
2. The Nutcracker
3. A Button
4. 4
5. d) 1843
6. Jacob Marley
7. North America
8. Weebles
9. Capricorn
10. Rubik's Cube
11. George V
12. Canada
13. H2O
14. Tinsel
15. Robins
(because their uniforms were red)
16. Christmas Trees
17. The Lion, the Witch and
The Wardrobe by C.S. Lewis
18. A Spider's Web
19. Christmas Cards
20. Snowflakes



Christmas Services

Blue Christmas service - Sunday 3rd December 4pm
at Muckairn Parish Church

Carols by Candlelight- Sunday 10th December 4pm
at Muckairn Parish Church

Candle Lighting Service - Christmas Eve. Sunday
24th December. 5pm at Kilchrenan Church

Christmas Day service Monday 25th December -
11am at Muckairn Parish Church