

Loanhead Parish Church

Newsletter

Advent/Christmas 2020

Dear Friends

Over the past week my thoughts have turned to Christmas and to what we can do this year. Like everyone though, our plans have to be shaped round the restrictions that are in place—and we are trying to ensure that as a church we do as much as possible to provide opportunities for people to share together at events in and around the church to celebrate the birth of Christ.



You'll find details of all of this later in the newsletter and I hope that you will find ways of joining us, whether that is in person, online or through our phone line.

This will include a video of the Christmas story, with some of our families and children filming parts so that we can piece it all together into something we can show on Sunday 20th December. I look forward to seeing what they produce!

We are also encouraging people to **Journey together through Advent**, taking the time to watch a video each week and reflect on it with one or two other people. You'll find details about this on page 3.

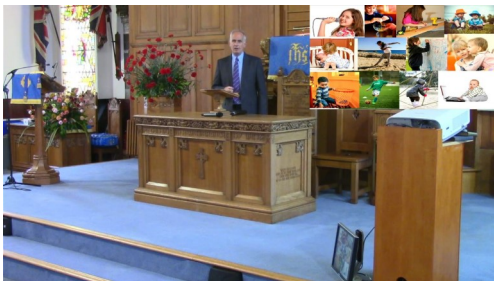
Looking back, Sunday morning services have continued to be well attended and people are now able to join us live via the Livestream with a recording of the service on the phone line. I am grateful for the support of Gary McGuire and his son Rylan in getting the Livestream up and running. Also for many others who help in different ways—it has been so encouraging to work with people who are motivated to do all they can to develop and sustain all we can through this time.

And in all of this, my prayer is that the coming month will direct us back to Jesus and the heart of a story of a God who knows us and loves us. To be reminded of the coming of a Saviour and to hear the words of the angels: *I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.*

May you know God's blessing over this season of Advent and into Christmas.

Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John D. M.' with a flourish at the end.



Church services continue on a Sunday at 10.30 a.m. Most weeks there are places but you need to book so that we can keep a note of who attends and ensure that we have a place for everyone who comes.

Bookings are open from 12 noon on the Thursday and you can book by calling or text using our dedicated number—07743107097.

Please indicate your name and the number you would like to book from your household—adults and children. Once a month children, families and young people get priority for our Family Services

Streaming Services online: We now stream our services in the church live at 10.30 a.m. on Sundays through Youtube, allowing people to connect with what is happening in the church and to be part of what we share together. It is also available to watch later.



For those of you with a **SMART TV you can watch it there**—just open Youtube and search for “Loanhead Parish Church.” If you would like help setting this up please let us know.

Phone 0131 297 6197: The Sunday service is available on our phone line from 1 p.m. on a Sunday.

Sunday Gathering is at 11.30 a.m. on Sundays. This is hosted on Zoom and gives a more informal time to share — like having tea and coffee after our morning service! See the website for details.

“Thought for the Day” is a short reflection, often linked in with a bible passage. It provides something midweek as a focus and encouragement. It is available on the website on a Tuesday and a Thursday—and is also available on the phone line.

Remembrance Garden Thanks to all who helped with this, taking turns to manage the sales of the poppies and crosses. Almost £400 was raised for Poppy Scotland and folk really valued the opportunity to plant their crosses.

It is something we are looking to repeat next year, which will be the centenary of the Poppy Appeal. As part of that, we hope that people will add the name of someone whose name is listed on the war memorial in Loanhead to their cross before they place it in the ground.





Advent calendars and the advent wreath in the church help on our countdown towards Christmas—but should also remind us that advent is a time of preparation. Not just to prepare well by buying presents or sorting what we are going to eat on Christmas Day, but taking time to stop and reflect—to prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of Christ.

This year we are offering the opportunity to take time each week with one or two other people to reflect on parts of the Christmas story in the lead up to the birth of Christ. So over the 4 weeks of advent we will produce a video for people to watch along with some things to reflect on about our own faith journey. We'll take some time to look at

- The message of the angel to Mary
- Joseph's journey with God
- The journey to Bethlehem
- "No room at the inn"



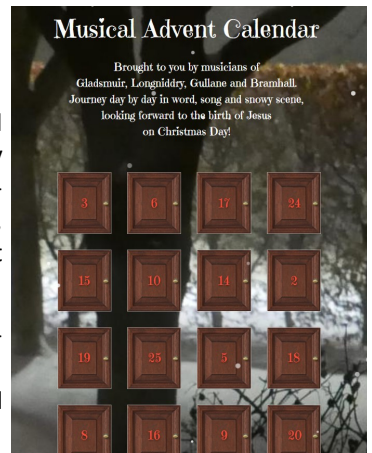
We are inviting you to arrange to watch the videos each week then meet up and go for a walk or a coffee with someone else to chat through what you saw and heard. Or get together with a small group via Zoom. The videos will appear on the church website.

If you want to take part but can't think of someone to travel this journey with give us a call or message us and we will help you out.

Musical Advent Calendar

If you'd prefer something to do on your own, you could use this Musical Advent Calendar. Organised by Longniddry Parish Church, unlike most Advent calendars, this one is not offered with children in mind, though families could readily explore it together. It offers:

- A daily Bible quotation with a reference to the entire reading
- A hymn – some old favourites, some less well known
- A photograph of a usually very snowy scene



Use the link below to follow it through Advent <https://tuerchen.com/23a5dbc7>

Christmas tree



This year we are going to be putting a Christmas tree up in the church grounds as well as inside the church. Please come and add a ribbon or a bauble to the tree. It might be in memory of someone or could simply be a message of hope, love, joy or peace, the themes we use during Advent.

Christmas Gifts

There are many families here in Loanhead where children may wake up on Christmas morning with few gifts to open. If you would like to help change Christmas for a local family this year, you could buy a gift for a child from birth to 15 years.

Please bring your (unwrapped) gift along to our service on 29th November (Family Service) or 6th December (Communion Service) and leave your gift under the tree. You can also bring them to the church from 10am until 12 noon on Saturday 5th December.



All gift donations will be sorted by our Community Outreach team and delivered to families in Loanhead in time for Christmas Day. We will do everything in line with government guidance and taking every precaution against Covid19.

Reverse Advent Calendar

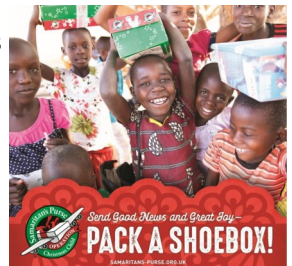


Last year we encouraged people to use reverse Advent calendar—a list of things to buy (one each day) to give away to families at Christmas—and are repeating that this year. If you missed doing this you can still bring along a gift for the Foodbank

The church will be open on Saturday 5th December 10-12 for you to drop these off, or bring them along to Sunday worship on either 29th Nov or 6th Dec. If you have more than one bag, please tie them together with a piece of string.

Shoebox Appeal

A total of almost 30 shoeboxes were donated for Samaritan's Purse. Along with the 53 Irene Allan had put together during the year and two big boxes of hats and scarves they will make a huge difference to the Christmas experience of the young people who receive them. Thank you for your part in this.



Christmas Services & Events



Readings and reflections—Sunday 13th December 10.30 a.m.

Our “lessons and carols” service will be replaced with readings and reflections around the Christmas story. We will include two or three carols—but as we are not able to sing them out we will not major on this!

Memorial Service—Sunday 13th December 1.30 p.m.

For our Memorial Service for the bereaved the church will be set out with small tables in each row and during the service those who are there will be invited to light a candle in memory of their loved ones to place on these tables. You need to book for this using our booking line 07743107097

Carols in a car park—Sunday 13th December 7 p.m.

We can't sing outside or in the church—but we can sing in our cars and we are trying to organise a drive in event to allow people to share in some Christmas carols. If we can, we will include some recordings of carols being played by MacTaggart Scott Loanhead Brass Band .

Nativity—Sunday 20th December 10.30 a.m.

Our Nativity service will be different, with some of our families having acted out parts of the story for us to piece it all together in a video with the first showing at the morning service.

Christingle Services—Wed 23rd & Thu 24th December

See the back page for details about these services and booking for them.

Watchnight —Thu 24th December 11.30 p.m.

Watchnight service from 11.30 p.m. on Christmas Eve. You need to book through Eventbrite [loanheadparishchurch.co.uk/watchnight](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/loanheadparishchurch.co.uk/watchnight) or use our booking line 07743107097



Christmas Day service— Friday 25th December

Join us on Christmas Day at 10.30 a.m. if you can as we celebrate together the birth of Christ. Book using the booking line 07743107097

Church Finances

We have really appreciated the financial support of members and others over the last few months, with people responding positively to the extent that our deficit at the end of the year will be smaller than anticipated, with reserves to cover this. If you wish to make a one-off gift or set up a monthly standing order you can do this online or in person. The bank details are:



Bank of Scotland, 801742, Loanhead Parish Church 00451198

Building work

We had been holding off on doing work to maintain the roof and high level stone work, which needs pointed and re-set. With the increase in giving we have been able to arrange to have this completed over the next few months. The cost is over £7,000 - part of the ongoing maintenance required to keep our buildings in good condition



We continue to be part of conversations and conferences as we focus on the key elements of Growing Young—ensuring we are a church for all generations. At the latest conference the team involved identified 3 key goals:

1. Encourage faith conversations across the generations—providing opportunities for people to share with one another about their faith journey so that it becomes part of our every day conversation

2. To listen well to those who are under 35 to explore with four groups where they are in life and the part the church can play in supporting them in their faith journey

- Youth Group & those in 12-15 age
- 20's who used to be around and aren't now
- Parents & families
- Those in 20's early 30's around the congregation who don't have children

3. Continually ask the question: where can we involve younger people in serving and leadership?

These three areas will be looked at further over the next few months.



Our Youth group for older teenagers meets on a Thursday evening in the church hall, with six or seven young people attending each week. Led by Alan and Kieva, it has been great to see that group developing good relationships with the opportunity to explore faith together. We now have two groups using Minecraft to explore stories from the bible—one for those in S1-3 on a Sunday evening, with a group for those in primary school on a Wednesday afternoon. Alan and Kieva are supporting Kyle Anderson as he leads those groups.

On Sunday mornings, we continue to provide an opportunity for Primary school and pre-school children to share in activities in the hall during the service, linked to the theme. Once every four weeks we hold a Family service.

Real Advent Calendars



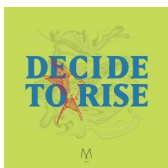
Each year we give real advent calendars to the youngsters involved in Junior Church and this year thanks to the generosity of Liz Veitch we are able to continue with that. The pack also has a small story book with the real Christmas story for the children and families to read together. A reminder of what lies at the heart of Christmas!

Christmas party

We won't be able to hold a traditional Christmas Party for our children this year, but are thinking through what we can do instead with an event either for the children themselves or families. We may show the video of our children acting out the Christmas story as part of this event. This will be on the afternoon of Sunday 20th December and we will email out details to families nearer the time.



The MOPS theme verse this year is Psalm 139v14 *I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.* We are meeting in small groups where the children get a chance to play together while the mums, socially distanced, explore different topics based around the theme, with 3 meetings a fortnight to accommodate everyone and they very much appreciate the chance to get together with others on the same journey and facing the same challenges .



CHRISTINGLE SERVICES



We are restricted to 50 people in the church building at any time but we don't want anyone to miss out so are holding 4 Christingle Services in the church building this year. We hope that even with reduced numbers, these services will still be special for all that attend.

As we come together we will learn about Jesus' birth and what He means to us, and as we light our Christingles and turn off the lights we will experience that magical atmosphere in the church. Our services will be on **Wednesday 23rd December at 4pm and 6pm and on Thursday 24th December at 4pm and 6pm** and *booking is essential* to attend a service.

Please book as a household group (max 6) and you will be seated together in the church, socially distanced from other households. There will be a small table near your seats with your Christingles. You will stay in your seats for the duration of the service, including the lighting of the Christingles. Please book for everyone attending, including children and infants. Face-coverings must be worn within the church.

Tickets for all services are available on Eventbrite loanheadparishchurch.co.uk/christingle

Tickets are free, but if you wish you can include a donation with one of your tickets. All Donations will go to CHAS, Childrens Hospices across Scotland, an amazing charity that provides care for dying children and their families. www.chas.org.uk



Children's Hospices Across Scotland

There will also be a very limited number of places available through our booking line, but please only use this if you are unable to use Eventbrite. Call or text 07743 107097 stating your name, which service (date and time) you wish to book for and how many places you wish to book (maximum 6).

Our 4 p.m. service on Christmas Eve will be Live-streamed on YouTube so you can join in from home if you cannot attend in person! Just go to YouTube.co.uk or the YouTube app on your TV, laptop or mobile device and search for Loanhead Parish Church. If you subscribe to our channel you will get a reminder when we Go Live

If you are going to join us online and would like a Christingle kit so that you can share in making a Christingle and light it during our service, please register at loanheadparishchurch.co.uk/christinglekit This will allow families and children who can't attend to take part. If you want to watch but don't want a Christingle kit there is no need to register!

