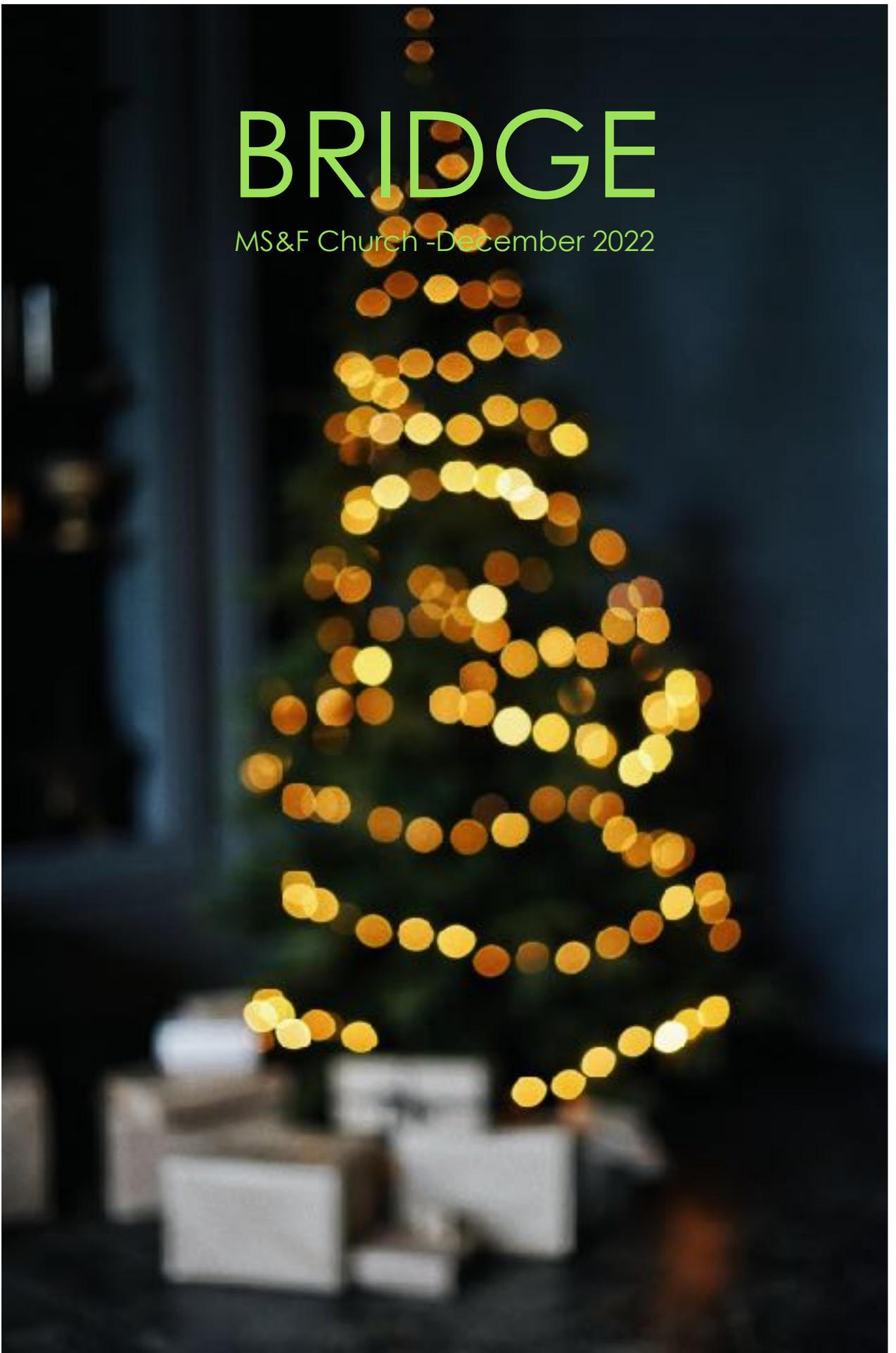


BRIDGE

MS&F Church - December 2022



A much briefer issue of Bridge, as we are all busy preparing for Christmas. Just a pointer to some of the positive things happening in MS&F and Montrose parish.

As Di noted on page 3, work is progressing well towards our formal union next year, but fruits can be seen already just by looking at the Christmas season services on page 4.

Also on page 4, a report about the “Warm Spaces” initiative supported by our local churches. It is very heartening and humbling to see just how much is already being done by so many different local agencies to provide physical and emotional support over this challenging winter. Do support it please.

Wishing you all a very happy, peaceful and healthy Christmas.

Douglas Craig

It's for the kids!

Geoff Redmayne

How often have you heard it said that Christmas is for the kids! There is something about the wide eyed wonder and the sheer excitement of children that feeds into the narrative of Christmas being a special time of year. Perhaps the Christmas of Santa Claus, reindeer and bundles of presents is for the kids but if that is our perception of Christmas then we are way off the mark.

Maybe it is two millennia of history that dulls our senses, perhaps we have grown cynical or is it even possible that we have never got to grips with the real meaning of the season? Christmas is a little bit like an onion! We have to peel back layer upon layer, mostly of man's invention or elaboration, to get to that kernel of truth. The myth of Santa Claus, for example, has its origins in the generosity of St Nicholas of the 4th Century. But that story has been elaborated on in European tradition and morphed with the English figure of Father Christmas and the Dutch figure of Sinterklaas. The Coca Cola company had their say in the widely accepted tradition of Santa Claus giving him his now familiar red robes.

Let's strip back those layers though. Christmas is of course Christ-mas. It is all about Jesus Christ. It is the celebration of his birth. Those very early Christians may have taken over a pagan mid winter festival but they did so recognising that those dark winter days required a festival of light. The prophet Isaiah speaking of the promised Messiah said “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned” (Isaiah 9:2) and John, in the prologue to his Gospel writes, “In him [the Word - the Christ] was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (John 1:4&5). John goes on to write, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14). Both he and Isaiah understood the nature of the Christ and the light that was born into this dark world. That light is the love of God for you, not just the children, but you in all stages of your life.

Perhaps we need to recognise that light all the more in the darkness of this world - war, hunger, drought, stress, fuel poverty, extreme weather events and more are all around us this winter. The light still shines, for as John says “the darkness has not overcome it” and it shines for you this year and throughout the year.

Is this the time to step aside from the hustle and bustle of the season and contemplate the Christ Child and what he has done for you in his life and death and continues to do for you in his risen life? Is this the time to recapture for yourself the wonder and awe of Christmas?

After all, Christmas in all its meaning is for you!

The Montrose Transition Team is a group working together on behalf of the three congregations which will form the new union of Montrose Churches of Scotland. It comprises the ministers, (one of whom - the Rev Chris Hay from Arbroath - is a Locum as Hillside and Dun is currently vacant), Shona Barakat the youth worker, Ian Gray the Ordained Local Minister (OLM) and three lay members from each congregation make up the team.

I am a new recruit joining Gordon and Jamie, and much progress has already been made. Finding out how we currently work and putting together proposals for how we see the future, has laid the foundation for the practical steps we need to take. It's been gratifying to find common purpose in mission and interesting to see how we have done some things differently over the years. Now that the Presbytery Mission Plan has been approved, we can swiftly move towards combining our efforts under one Kirk session, with joint Teams operating in a similar way to the Teams we currently have.

Some of the Teams have already been in contact with each other and it is proposed to have a joint Kirk Session meeting early in the New Year. This will have the dual purpose of getting to know one another and inspiring us to work together for the glory of God in this area. The future emphasis of the Church of Scotland has to be mission, and whilst the process of union may be a little complicated and will definitely require co-operation, we are committed to bring these changes about swiftly during the coming months. We pray the union will result in less time spent on business meetings to free us for the real work of the kingdom. There will be no fewer elders, but only some will handle the administrative aspects of church life, giving the others scope for a more practical role in the community. The advantage of the Unitary Constitution and Teams is that everyone should be involved and using their gifts, not leaving all the work to the Minister and elders.

Change is always difficult but often more in anticipation than realisation. Montrose South and Ferryden congregation has undergone several changes in recent years, but we have seen God's blessing and have grown closer together as a result. Let's pray that we will also draw closer together with our brothers and sisters in the two other Church of Scotland congregations as we unite. We have some experience already with the Parish Grouping which has resulted in supporting Shona our youth worker, and whilst we will still meet in our own geographical areas week by week, we have this new opportunity to work together, pool our resources and have a greater impact as we move into this next phase of (we pray) more effective witness.

Two of my favourite verses seem relevant at this time.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4 v 6 & 7

UNIFIED NAME

One important factor is the new name for the parish and suggestions are welcome. This must meet the criteria set down by OSCR (the Scottish Charities Regulator) in the format: -

Montrose: *** .Church of Scotland.**

It is the formal name required for letter headings and so on but should sound as good in a shortened version for everyday use. It must also be approved by the Law Department. We will also need to identify the different centres clearly. How we will arrive at a final decision is still under discussion.

This probably means that **Montrose: Hillside, Dun, Old & St. Andrews, South & Ferryden** will NOT be a contender for the title.

What is worth remembering, as we proudly hold on to our own particular church names, is that for at least the past 150 years churches in our area have been uniting and changing their titles as they have rationalised their diminishing congregation sizes.

The excellent timeline for Old & St. Andrews Church produced by Forbes Inglis, and viewable on the Church's website shows all the coming and goings in the 1840s. The Parish Church was dedicated in 1793, so presumably “Old” was not part of its title then. The Union of Old & St. Andrews took place in 2004. St. Andrews Church itself was already a union of St. George's & Trinity, with St. Luke's & St. John's. Great job for the local sign writer?

On Monday 7 November, at the Philos Hub, 17 interested parties from MS&F, other local churches, Mandown, MoHub, and the Playhouse Cinema met to discuss the need for a venue for the “Warm Spaces” initiative designed to support needy and elderly folk through this upcoming winter energy crisis.

The task of the group was to identify suitable venues with comfortable warm rooms, and kitchen facilities which are compliant with H&S regulations. Ideally a venue at either end of town, and capable of being open to the public weekly to provide a warm space with food and drink, ideally free.

Because the Philos Hub currently fits all these criteria, and already operates the Philos Café on Wednesdays between 1pm and 3pm, it was agreed to begin the Warm Space initiative in the Hub, following on from our café, between 3pm to 7 or 8pm, beginning on Wednesday 14 December

Once the Borrowfield Community Centre has its own H&S compliant kitchen completed, it will then open at different times.

It was hugely encouraging to hear of all the support currently being provided in the town, from refreshments and food in Philos, ManDown, the MoHub and Baptist church. RCCG have begun their own Foodbank twice weekly in Castle Street.

More inventively, the Playhouse Cinema supplies fruit and veg twice weekly, “Pay what you can” film screenings, a repair café - for clothing and small electrical appliances, as well as “Angel Giving” and “Christmas Meal Tree” in conjunction with Brymer’s Butchers of Brechin.

Montrose Fire and Rescue are also running a Tesco voucher scheme for other needy folk.

Another practical support will be provided by Pat Tweedie giving basic cookery lessons at the MoHub and the Playhouse as well as providing meals at Philos Hub.

The steering group of Sarah Archibald, Pat Tweedie and Anne Tulley are looking for volunteers to support these initiatives, as well as food and cash donations, fund raising and production of a flyer advertising all available activities.

For further information, please contact

asarah73@gmail.com

Sunday 11th December

6.30pm Carol Concert with Montrose Town Band & The Song Shop in Old & St Andrews Church (IM)

Sunday 18th December

2.00pm “A Time to Remember” a service of reflection and remembrance in Dun & Hillside Church (IG & GR)

6.00pm Christmas Sing- a- long in Ferryden Church Hall in conjunction with 10:10 Club & Ferryden Community Choir (GR/MC)

Saturday 24th December

6.30pm Early evening service for families in Ferryden Church Hall (GR)

7.00pm Evening Service at Dun & Hillside (IG)

11.30pm Watchnight Service in Old & St Andrew’s Church (Gathering Carols from 11.15pm) (IM)

Sunday 25th December

10.30am Short All-Age Service for Christmas Day in Old & St Andrew’s Church. (IM)

10.30am Worship for all the family for Christmas Day in MS&F Church, Ferryden (GR)

11.00am Service for Christmas Day in Dun & Hillside Church (IG)

Sunday 1st January

11.00am Joint service for New Year’s Day in MS&F Church, Ferryden GR/IM/IG



Debby Hudson - Unsplash

