

A deep clean



Katharine Smith *reflects on* Luke 3:1-6

The woodwork, walls and ceilings are being repainted. Threadbare carpets are being replaced; soft furnishings are being cleaned. Something exciting is happening. The news is in the air we breathe. He's coming, the king is coming at long last – quick, get ready, prepare for the promised day of the Lord, bringing freedom and peace.

And us? What about us? Are we clean and smart enough to meet the king? Certainly we'll wash and put on our best, maybe even new, clothes. But inside? We have to be clean inside as well? Suddenly we remember speaking unkindly about a colleague, being impatient with a friend, feeling jealous of someone's good fortune, hanging on to an old grudge. Suddenly we think of the words of the prophet Malachi: "who can endure the day of his coming?... he is like a refiner's fire... a refiner and purifier of silver". Suddenly we don't feel so excited after all. We are afraid of standing before the king "to whom all hearts are open, all desires known", as the Collect for Purity puts it. We become aware that we need God's refining fire and the deep waters of baptism. We know we need God's forgiveness and help to be ready to receive the Son, both in the Bethlehem stable, as we remember his birth, and at his coming again in clouds of glory. ☺

Yorkshire carols

Sheffield carols

by Caroline Fletcher

Caroline lives and works in Stannington, on the edge of the Peak District.

Everybody knows carols like "Away in a Manger", but visit a pub in the north west of Sheffield before Christmas and you are likely to hear carols you've never heard before. From mid-November pubs are packed with locals singing

selections of carols distinct to each establishment. Some are so local they are named after particular Sheffield villages.

They have their roots in eighteenth-century church music which was composed by local people and played on fiddles and wind instruments. In later years, after vernacular music fell out of favour with the church authorities, parish churches replaced this music with standardised hymns, robed choirs and organs. However, local musicians kept these carols alive, taking them around villages and into pubs, adding new festive tunes to their repertoire. While these carols have died out across most of England, in this tiny part of Yorkshire they are thriving. ☺

“ Theology makes sense only in the context of worship and action.

John Macquarrie (1919-2007), Scottish theologian

Lord Jesus, as we prepare to celebrate your birth, help us also to prepare for your return. Give us a vision of your glory, shine your light in our darkness and bring joy and peace into our hearts and minds. Amen.

National Parks

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs

by Jo Jones

I have not visited this National Park, north of Glasgow – a typical failure to appreciate what is in my own country, when I have travelled extensively in Europe. But looking at photos on the internet I am inspired, wondering if I am fit enough to climb Ben Lomond.

The UN's International Mountain Day is on Tuesday, to remind us how important mountains are to our world. They supply food and clean energy, and sixty to eighty per cent of the world's fresh water. They cover around twenty-two per cent of the earth's land surface and are home to thirteen per cent of the world's population. They look majestic, yet their fragile ecosystems are under threat from climate change, land degradation and over-exploitation.

In the Bible, mountaintops are "thin" places, where God is met and heard. I think they continue to remind us what matters in life. ☺

Church of Scotland: Orphir and Stenness Parish

Interim Moderator: Rev June Freeth 721449

Locum Minister Rev Martin Prentice 851139

Session Clerk: Nicol 811242

Kirk Information

There is a loop system. Adjust hearing aids to benefit. Switch off phones. They cause interference with the organ. Thank you

A warm invitation is extended to everyone to meet in the hall at the back of the church, after the service, for a cup of tea or coffee.

Intimations

Tonight 7pm: Christmas Concert: in the Kirk.

Tuesday - 7- 8pm: Fellowship

Tuesday - 8pm: Choir

Thursday – 10am – 12noon: Community Café in the kirk hall

Malawi: There will be a retiring offering next Sunday in support of the Presbytery's Malawi Partnership. The projects chosen by our Malawi partners are for borehole restoration (maintenance and restoration of community water supplies), roofing and structural repairs to three church buildings and one new build at Mbandanga. Over the last years the Christmas Appeal has raised close on £50,000 for frontline projects, making a huge difference to the lives of ordinary people. Thank you for your support. Graeme

Tree Festival: Sundays December 9th 16th 23rd & 30th
Thursdays December 13th 20th & January 3rd
Saturdays December 15th & 22nd

Volunteers Needed: To bake and/or serve at the extra Saturday Tree Festival cafes or to be on 'welcome duty' in the kirk during the Tree festival Please sign up on the yellow rota form in the kirk hall.

Readings: Malachi 3:1-4 Luke 3:1-6

Hymns: 474 Hail to the Lord's anointed
334 On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry
88 Up from the depths
543 Longing for light
290 The race that long in darkness pined

Doxology May God's blessing surround you each day,
As you trust Him and walk in his way,
May his presence within guard and keep you from sin,
Go in peace, go in joy, go in love.