

# Listen very carefully

Katharine Smith *reflects on* Luke 3:7-18

**L**arge numbers of people respond to John's call, but they might be taken aback by his reaction. He doesn't thank them for coming, or offer an encouraging and reassuring welcome. In fact, he does the opposite and we can perhaps imagine their feelings on being called a "brood of vipers", and told that simply being born into Abraham's family doesn't give anyone an automatic right to salvation.

How would we feel if we heard John tell us that, just because we might attend church and call ourselves Christians, we're not automatically guaranteed a place in God's kingdom? Surely it would sound very threatening, especially when John goes on to talk about trees that don't bear fruit being cut down and burned. We might ask, with the people on the banks of the Jordan, "What should we do?", and John will give us the answers he gave them:

Be mindful of those in need and share what you have with those who have nothing. Feed the world. Be honest and trustworthy with your belongings and your money. Be content with what you have and don't be constantly complaining and wanting more. Repent and be baptised and then be ready to meet the one who is to come – who will demand more of you and offer you a baptism of fire for the salvation of your soul. 🍷

**Lord Jesus, help us to live honestly, showing generosity and love towards others. Let us never be complacent in our faith, but always alert, open to receiving your spirit and ready to do your will. Amen.**

## Yorkshire carols

the Crown and Glove

by Caroline Fletcher

"It will be very hot and crowded," I was warned before heading out to sing carols in my local pub in Stannington. "Standing room only" nowhere near describes it: people were crammed into every available space. There were no musical instruments, no word sheets or

introductions to the carols. A man simply started singing and as soon as people had worked out which carol it was, they joined in with football-stadium gusto! Their familiarity with these tunes is remarkable, for they are not regular carols. There was nothing a southerner like me would recognise, apart from "While Shepherds Watched", and even that was sung to a completely different tune with an unfamiliar chorus. These were all local carols with complex parts and ornate melodies. Certain brave souls even kept up the tradition of performing some solo. How amazing to experience the Christmas message sung with such spirit and passion! 🍷



## National Parks

Exmoor

by Jo Jones

I cross the cattle grids and I am in open country. I feel my mind expanding and my heart soaring. Exmoor offers vast spaces and huge skies. Farmed for generations, yet here domestic animals get a chance to live freely.

I love the sight of Exmoor ponies or traditional Horn sheep roaming the moors at their own pace. At their own pace is perhaps the key: here we can walk, cycle or – with my admiration – run, or sit and absorb all that comes to us if we take the time to allow it. Binoculars and a bird book help me spot a rare ring ouzel on a distant rocky scree, a magnifying glass takes me into the world of the lichen growing at my knee and flourishing in Exmoor's clean air. As with faith, the more time I take in stillness, the more awe-inspiring is everything that I see. 🍷

“God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supplies.”

Hudson Taylor (1832-1905), British missionary to China

# Orphir and Stenness Church of Scotland

**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

**Today** - Retiring collection for the Malawi Partnership

**Tuesday** - 7- 8pm: Fellowship - 8pm: Choir

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

**24<sup>th</sup> Dec** – Watchnight Service 11.15 for 11.30pm

<b>Tree Festival:</b>	Sundays	16 <sup>th</sup>	23 <sup>rd</sup>	&	30 <sup>th</sup>	11:15 – 12:15
	Thursdays	20 <sup>th</sup>	27 <sup>th</sup>	&	January 3 <sup>rd</sup>	10am - noon
	Saturday	22 <sup>nd</sup>				10am – 4pm

**Readings:** Luke 3. 7-18

**Hymns:** 284 – “Hope is a candle”  
274 – “Comfort, comfort now my people  
279– “Make way  
282– “Christmas is Coming”  
253 – “Inspired by love and anger

L:We come to prepare the way;  
A:The way for Christ –  
L:the hope of Christ, the peace of  
Christ –

A:to enter our world,

L:to enter our hearts.

A:We cry out together in the  
wilderness:

L:The kingdom of heaven has come near.

A:We come to be part of the light–  
the light that shines in the darkness.

L:Watch out! Be alert!  
Christ comes when you least expect  
it.

**All:**In the beggar on the street,  
In the loved one at our table,  
In the stranger in our pew,  
In the refugee on our shores,  
In the hour of birth.  
In the hour of death.

L: With judgement and mercy, Christ  
comes.

Watch out! Be alert!

**All:**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the  
Holy Spirit, will be with you now and always. Amen!

**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.