



Magazine

No. 2025 December 2025

Dear Friends

It is such a deceptively simple phrase - God with us, Emmanuel, yet it makes theologies, philosophies, and political theories reel. This one act of God, which is all that Advent, Christmas and beyond is about, redefines so much. It redefines God. The One Who was, 'high above', 'out there', 'beyond', enters into creation and becomes part of it. God Who is often so hard to get hold of suddenly becomes an infant, a vulnerable baby, Who can be cradled in our carols and prayers and services in the coming Christmas season, and beyond.

God with us, Emmanuel.

The traditional nativity scenes, crowded with the Holy Family, angels and shepherds, wise men and farm yard animals fades too quickly. The world beyond the Incarnation, the Christmas Story, soon encroaches. The Roman Empire had its world to protect, where might was right. Herod advanced to defend his throne by the slaughter of innocents. Religious authorities moved in to point out how little Emmanuel knew about God's real nature. Angels depart, shepherds and wise men go home, and we, come the New Year, take down decorations and store them away. Almost as if we lose interest in Emmanuel when He grows up and has other ideas which impinge on the way we lead our lives in the everyday and the ordinary. Maybe next year that presence will stay with us, and touch us in the places of our lives where we need reminding of Jesus.

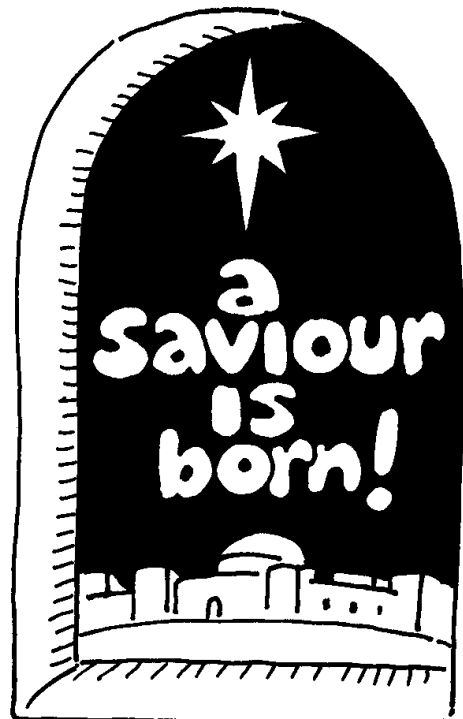
But for the moment, let the shepherds dance, and the angels sing, and the wise men give gifts, and Joseph watch over the Child, and Mary cuddle Him. For the moment, let us believe and live as if God has been given into our hands. God with us, Emmanuel.

And maybe, next year, we too will find that though we drift, God does not go away, but stays beside us, a presence for good, a presence for hope, a presence for love.

God with us, Emmanuel.

Have a blessed Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Very Revd Dr Derek Browning



WORSHIP NOTES



Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

We share communion in Church at 9.30am and 10.30am on **Sunday 7th December**. At the 10.30am service, if anyone wishes to receive the wine of communion from the Common Cup, please join the Minister at the small table situated near the vestibule door.

Services and events over Christmas 2025 and the New Year 2026

14th December: No 9.30am service.

10.30am All Age service led by the Sunday Club. (Christmas Treats in the St Matthew Hall after the 10.30am service. Please remember to give generously.)

After this service we will require help to remove church chairs in preparation for the South Morningside Primary School service in the following days.

17th December: Telephone Choir carol singalong, 7.30pm, in the Church.

Donations go towards supporting the Wednesday Disabled Club.

21st December: 9.30am Early Service (Cluny Hall)

10.30am Traditional Service of Lessons and Carols

3.00 pm Blue Christmas Service in the Church. (A half hour service for those who find this time of year difficult or sad. Refreshments served in the St Matthew Hall afterward.)

24th December: Christmas Eve 6.30pm All age service

Carols by Candlelight from 11.00pm

Watchnight Service from 11.30pm

This year our retiring offerings will support the two Church Charities:

The David Nott Foundation

Training doctors and medical staff working globally in areas of catastrophe conflict. Currently working in Libya, Somaliland, Sudan, South Sudan, Moldova, Ukraine, Iraq, Palestine, Syria and Yemen.

Edinburgh Clothing Store

The Edinburgh Clothing Store (ECS) is a charity run by volunteers, offering clothing, shoes, bedding, curtains and towels for people in genuine need such as individuals and families who are on low income, or vulnerable through personal circumstances. It's a free service made possible by volunteers and donations. The ECS is run totally by volunteers and with over 1,500 people referred to the service annually, donations of money and good quality clothing, bedding and towels are greatly appreciated.

25th December: Christmas Day service 10am

28th December: No 9.30am service

10.30am Morning Worship (no tea and coffee after the service)

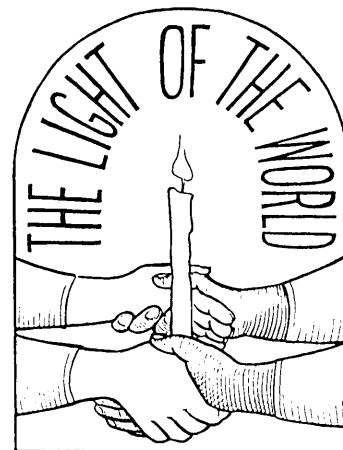
4th January 2025: Epiphany

9.30am & 10.30am services resume (Tea and coffee resumes)



BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE - 21st December, 3pm in the Church

Many find the annual landmark of Christmas a difficult one to negotiate after a bereavement. Not just the first Christmas 'without...' but each year the season often highlights the absence. Many churches host a 'Blue Christmas' service. Our practice has been to hold a half-hour afternoon service on the Sunday nearest Christmas. Dimmed lights, Church decorated, and chairs placed in our chancel area near the communion table. I conduct a short service, we sing three of the quieter carols, (*Child in the manger, Love came down at Christmas, Still the night*), and then talk about why Christmas can be a difficult time and it being hard for people to be happy at that time of year, and to mean it.



In truth it has never been the most wonderful time of the year. Certainly not in the days surrounding the first Christmas. The story of Jesus' birth is not to be told with a jolly voice and a ho-ho-ho. It is the story of a light sent to shine in the darkness, which the world snuffed out. It is the story of God's never-ending mercy, which was rejected. We cannot come to the manger without acknowledging that it lies in the shadow of the cross.

And yet, if we remember the real story: Mary was alone and afraid, but God remained with her and lifted her up among women. Joseph was disgraced, but God revealed in that disgrace a plan to save the world. The world was in darkness, but God sent the light of life to shine. We are not alone, for in Jesus Immanuel, God is with us. The people rejected God, but God still embraces us.

During the service we invite people to write the names of a loved one they are missing, or a situation that is grieving them, on a pre-cut and ribboned cardboard star. These are then hung on a twig-branch Remembering Tree which is left up in Church over the Christmas Season. The tree is used by others outwith the Blue Christmas service by those attending other Church services. A gentle way to remember at Christmas, to recognize loss, but also to give thanks. After the Blue Christmas service each person is given a white rose to take home, and we also have refreshments in the hall, where many share their experiences of the last year, or choose to talk about anything other than the bereavement. It is a poignant and gentle but unforced time.

There is a sense of sadness, of course, but also a sense that meeting in the Church, whether the mourners come from a faith background or not, and whether there was a Church funeral or not, there is a sense of being *held* in sanctuary, where something gentle and intimate can happen.

There is a powerful sense of God's Spirit at work. And for that, we give thanks.

CHRISTMAS TREATS - Sunday, 14th December

Come along after the 10.30am service to the St Matthew's Hall and enjoy some mulled wine and Christmas fare. Coffee and tea is also on offer for those who are driving as the mulled wine does contain ALCOHOL.



KIRK SESSION NEWS

The Kirk Session met in November and discussed the following:

Presbytery Reform - The Moderator reported that since the last Session meeting there had been another meeting with representatives of the three churches on 23 October at Fairmilehead. This meeting was intended, in the absence of any progress on the governance issues, to focus as stated in the September minutes, on the one area which could be “progressed immediately” - namely how “the three churches could work together missionally and for now park the governance issue”. However one Kirk Session in the three-way grouping had requested a temporary pause in the process. The Moderator has pressed for action from the Presbytery Deployment Committee and a meeting with the Committee has been arranged for 3 December.

Umbrella Festival Proposal - a fundraising campaign for roof repairs is under active consideration and more information will be available in the coming weeks.

Stewardship & Finance - Euan Murray, treasurer, reported that our financial situation remained challenging and the committee was looking at a plan to reduce the deficit significantly next year. Every single cost is being carefully scrutinised as never before but we cannot avoid many of them going up. After a successful Review of Giving campaign last year, it is hoped that members will themselves review their giving in 2026. However, it is likely that we will have focussed Review of Giving campaigns on those who haven’t altered their giving in the past 5 years - there are about 20 in that category - and also those who don’t contribute each week using their Free Will Offering envelopes, which is what they were designed for. Having said this, clearly we do not, and should not, know each member’s financial circumstances and it is important that we respect that.

Pastoral - Doreen Reekie, Pastoral Convenor reported that the group’s latest bi-annual meeting has taken place with eight attendees and a further two sending their apologies. All present read out their reports on their visitees. A new member has been recruited from the recently appointed Elders. Enquiries are being made to identify new people and we have already been successful in finding them. Five new member Welcome Packs have been delivered with a further one due for delivery.

Communications - Isobel Paterson, Convenor reported that Christmas Tree Festival arrangements were well in hand with three different musical contributions, and refreshments on both Saturdays. Any profits will go to Morningside Hope and the David Nott Foundation.

Outreach/ Social - the Moderator reported that the recent Speaker’s Supper had been very successful and there was the possibility that Sir Paul Grice might be invited back at a future date, not speaking on education but on his previous career as a senior Civil Servant at Holyrood. He is willing to do this sometime after the Scottish Parliamentary elections in May.

Presbytery Elder’s Report - Presbytery met on 4 November and covered the usual wide range of business including approving a new basis, or adjusting a recently agreed basis, of union of several congregations. It is interesting to note the approved choices of names of the new congregations - some being a simple addition of the names and others striking out for something completely different. For example, even among the few congregations considered at this meeting the diversity was shown. Thus, Duddingston Kirk and Richmond Craigmillar Church are now to be united as **Duddingston Richmond Craigmillar Church**; the congregations of Corstorphine Old and Craigsbank to be united as **Corstorphine Old and New**; **Newington Trinity** comprises the former congregations of Craigmillar Park, Mayfield Salisbury and Priestfield and the **Northwest Kirk** comprises the former Cramond Kirk and Pennywell Kirk. No doubt these new names will become as well known as the former names but at the moment it can take a moment to place what congregation is under discussion!

During the meeting there was an interesting short talk on the work of the **NHS Spiritual Care Team** by Mark Evans DCS. This team provides, as the name suggests, spiritual care to patients, often at very short notice and often at end of life or other emergency situations, in response to a request from or on behalf of patients or their family with little, lapsed or no connections with established religions. He was clearly very committed to the service provided, with perhaps a hint at the hope of further recruitment or support from Edinburgh and West Lothian Presbytery.

Presbytery congratulated the Revd Gordon Kennedy, currently Minister of Craiglockhart Church on his selection as **Moderator Designate of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland for 2026- 2027**.

READER IN TRAINING, GRAEME ALLAN, INTRODUCES HIMSELF

Hello, I'm Graeme Allan and as Dr Browning has already mentioned, I am a Reader In Training in the Church of Scotland. I'm looking forward to the time I will be spending with you until around about Easter.

I'm a member of Corstorphine Old Parish Church- man and boy- where I was ordained as an Elder in 2006. In recent years I have undertaken fundraising sponsored walks on behalf of Young Lives vs Cancer, formerly Malcom Sargent. They strive to support children, teenagers, young adults and their families through the entire journey of a cancer diagnosis. One way they achieve this is through their 'homes from home' initiative, where they provide accommodation for families near hospitals where cancer treatment is provided. One such home is Ciaran's House, here in Edinburgh. To date, I've helped raise just under £3,000 for them.



Although I'm not currently working, among other jobs I've done I have been a tour bus ticket seller in the city centre - outside every day, no matter the weather. A good thing about that job was being able to be an ambassador for not only Edinburgh, but Scotland as well. Among my hobbies is music, I've sung in choirs and played in a Strathspey society for a number of years. Current affairs, Formula One and day trips are among other hobbies and pastimes of mine.

ROLL CHANGES



Please remember in your prayers the family and friends of
Bob Stevenson, who died on 30 October 2025.

Please give a warm welcome to our newest member,
Mrs Valerie Steel.



Morningside Hope

REMAINING DATES for 2025

There will be no groups during the weeks of 21st & 28th December, restarting Monday 5th January.

HEART FOR ART: Held every Tuesday in St Matthews' Hall, 11- 1pm

MUSIC AND MEMORIES IN MORNINGSIDE Held in the Cluny Hall 2- 4pm

Mondays 1st and 15th December (Christmas Party)

GENTLE EXERCISE CLASSES dementia friendly but open to all 60+

Held in the St Matthew's Hall, Monday 8th December (Christmas Party) 2-4pm

GAMES AFTERNOON: open to everyone, these afternoons are a chance to meet up with friends old and new, play our favourite board games, jigsaws etc. and have a coffee and catch up.

Wednesday 17th December (Christmas Party) 2-4pm

DATES for 2026

HEART FOR ART: workshops for those with dementia and their partners/carers

Held every **Tuesday** in the St Matthew's Hall, from 6th January onwards 11- 1pm

Annual Art Exhibition: Saturday 26th September



MUSIC AND MEMORIES IN MORNINGSIDE: workshops for those with dementia and their partners/carers

Held on 1st and 3rd **Mondays** in the month, 2- 4pm in the Cluny Hall

January: 5th & 19th

February: 2nd & 16th

March: 2nd & 16th

April: 13th & 20th

(6th is Easter Monday, so no class that day)

May: 4th & 18th

June: 1st & 15th

July: 6th & 20th

August: 3rd & 17th

September: 7th & 21st

October: 5th & 19th

November: 2nd & 16th

December: 7th and 21st (Christmas Party)

GENTLE EXERCISE CLASSES: dementia friendly but **open to all 60+**

The class will last 40-45 minutes, followed by tea, coffee and the chance to chat.

Held on 2nd and 4th **Mondays**, 2-4pm in the church itself

January: 12th & 26th

February: 9th & 23rd

March: 9th & 23rd

April: 13th & 27th

May: 11th & 25th

June: 8th & 22nd

No classes in July or August

September: 14th & 28th

October: 12th & 26th

November: 9th & 23rd

December: 14th December (Christmas Party)

GAMES AFTERNOON: open to **everyone**, these afternoons are a chance to meet up with friends old and new, play our favourite board games, jigsaws etc. and have a coffee and catch up.

Held once a month on a **Wednesday** afternoon, 2-4pm

January: 21st

February: 18th

March: 18th

April: 15th

May: 20th

June: 17th

No classes in July or August

September: 16th

October: 21st

November: 18th

December: 16th (Christmas Party)

ANIMAL AFTERNOONS: (to be confirmed)

Tuesday 23rd June Therapy ponies 2- 4pm

Wednesday 7th October Alpacas 2pm,

CANAL BOAT TRIP: Monday 30th March, 1.30pm - 12 places available

DEMENTIA FRIENDLY CONCERTS: We offer four dementia-friendly concerts a year. Open to everyone, this will be a varied programme. Each concert lasts 40 – 45mins and is followed by teas and coffees.

Saturday 28th March 2pm Margaret Wakeford and Simon Coverdale, Piano Duo

Saturday 30th May, 2pm Saturday 26th September, 2pm Saturday 28th November, 2pm

TALK: Tuesday 5th May at 3.15pm. Speaker, Mr Eric Melvin, **A Walk down the Royal Mile**

PLAYLIST FOR LIFE

Over two decades of scientific research has shown that listening to a personal playlist can improve the lives of people living with dementia. Our trained volunteers can support you to create a personalised playlist that can help • reduce anxiety • improve your mood • make difficult tasks more manageable • evoke memories that can help families and carers connect. For more information or to make an appointment, please contact Jacqui on the number or email below.

PLAYLIST FOR LIFE TRAINING: Friday 19th June 10 – 4pm

This interactive course explains the benefits of using personalised playlists to support people living with dementia and helps you to learn how to integrate these playlists into people's daily lives.

PASTORAL SKILLS COURSE: an Introduction: running over two evenings, Tuesdays 17th and 24th March, Braid Hall

Caring for one another is the responsibility of each and every one of us and so we are offering a brief introduction to Pastoral Skills running from 6 –9.30pm each evening, hopefully starting with a light supper.

There is a maximum of 16 places on the course. **It is open to anyone** interested in finding out a bit more about pastoral care, without the necessity of making any commitment beyond the course itself.

The course will look at topics such as:

- Communication & listening skills.
- Self-awareness & self-care
- Boundaries and why they matter.
- Dementia

The training will be hands on/experiential in nature and the aim, to make it an enjoyable experience for those attending. There is no charge for the training and CPD certificates will be provided.

PASTORAL SKILLS COURSE, PART 2: running over two evenings, Tuesday 20th & 27th October.

Open to those who have completed the introductory course above and want to further develop their skills and knowledge. Specialist subject for level two will be bereavement.

The Church also offers a **Coffee Morning** every Wednesday, 10 – 11.30am – all welcome!

Interested in attending? Please come along to any of the above, you will be made most welcome. Interested in volunteering? If you would like to help with any of these activities, please get in touch. Or simply interested in finding out a little bit more, just contact our Pastoral Assistant Jacqui Lindsay

on 07834 364 628 or e mail: pastoralassistant@morningsideparishchurch.org.uk



CREATING PLAYLISTS WITH SOME OF OUR YOUNG VOLUNTEERS FROM BOROUGHMUIR HIGH SCHOOL

We recently staged two afternoons as part of our Playlist for Life project. Eight young students from Boroughmuir took part along with six members of our congregation and a couple of our adult volunteers. Each person worked with either one or two young people to create their own, bespoke playlist.

We have now distributed leaflets about the project inviting those living with dementia and their carers to take part in the next stage, as we offer more of these afternoons. We have also been approached by one of the care homes asking us to go in and work with some of their residents.



If you are interested in finding out more about this newer offering from Morningside Hope, please get in touch.

Jacqui Lindsay: Tel: 07834 364 628 Email: pastoralassistant@morningsideparishchurch.org.uk

PASTORAL TRAINING LEVEL 2



This course took place on 21st and 28th October this year. Open to anyone who has completed the Level 1, we had nine people attending from six different churches and the feedback has been universally positive. I'm once again grateful to the social committee for providing suppers on each evening and to my colleague Susan Christopher who has helped me out on many of these courses.

"I enjoyed the course - I feel I can offer pastoral care with more confidence. Overall excellent, a valuable investment of time, Thank you!"

"I really enjoyed the course with a lovely group of people I felt very comfortable with. The teaching was super!"

We will be offering the course again in 2026.

Jacqui Lindsay: Tel: 07834 364 628 email: pastoralassistant@morningsideparishchurch.org.uk

THE LOCAL ECUMENICAL SERVICE for the **WORLD DAY OF PRAYER** On **FRIDAY 6th MARCH 2026**

Will be held in **Morningside Parish Church at 10.30am**

This service has been written by Christian women of Nigeria on the theme: "I Will Give You Rest: Come" (Matthew 11:28)

There will be a **Bible Study** on Friday 30th January 2026 at Church of Scotland Offices, 121 George Street from 10.30am till 12 noon.

As numbers and names of attendees of the Bible Study are required, you are requested to register your attendance via email: Morag.donaldson1@btinternet.com or by telephone 0131 657 1104 or mobile text 07708111403 by **28th January 2026**. Further details will be announced in January.





CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

13th – 20th DECEMBER 2025

We are hoping for your support for our Tree Festival this year. The two Saturdays: 13th and 20th December from 10 am – 2 pm are the main days when we will have our popular craft stall but also musical performances.

On 13th at 11 am we look forward to seeing junior pupils from George Watson's College perform for us again. They were much appreciated last year.

On 20th at 11 am some of our own choral scholars will make music for us. At 12.30 that same day, a group called Laurentum will offer vocal and instrumental music from the Middle Ages to the present day. This ensemble are mostly female singers from the Robin Chapel Choir.

Refreshments will be offered on both Saturdays from 10am – 12noon in the Braid Hall.

On weekdays the festival will be open each morning from 10am – 12noon when we hope to welcome visits from nurseries and care homes as well as anyone else from the community.

Issie Paterson

EDINBURGH TELEPHONE CHOIR - Wednesday 17th December, 7.30pm

You are warmly invited to join us for the annual event of an evening of carols and choir singing, led by Edinburgh Telephone Choir. We will be joined by the Wednesday Club, and there will be a retiring collection to support their work.

Rachel Pickett
Secretary, Edinburgh Telephone Choir



ORGAN MUSIC AT CHRISTMAS –

Thursday 18th December, 12.30 to 1.15.

There is a great deal of very attractive organ music written for the Christmas season (much of it based on traditional and well-known tunes), and I thought that it would be a good thing to play some of it in a seasonal recital. This could be a really rather lovely occasion, with all the Christmas trees in place, and it would be an informal "promenade" concert - folk being free to come and go as they pleased. And there would be the chance of making a small donation towards our Choral Scholarship scheme... Please do come - and bring your friends.

M.W.

Edinburgh:Morningside Parish Church of Scotland: Scottish Charity No: SCO34396

FLOWER LIST

The flowers in December and January have been donated and will be arranged as follows:-

		Donated by	Arranged by
December	7	E & G McHollan	Anne Armour & Issie Paterson
	14	CHRISTMAS	Flower Committee
	21	CHRISTMAS	Flower Committee
	28	CHRISTMAS	Flower Committee
January	4	CHRISTMAS	Flower Committee
	11	Alison Calder	Eleanor Watt
	18	Frances Bruce	Irene Wilson
	25	Euan Murray	Marjory Watson



The new flower list for 2026 is now available on the vestibule noticeboard. If you would like to supply flowers one Sunday, please put your name and phone number against your chosen date. The cost remains at £45. Cheques should be made payable to 'Morningside Parish Church Flower Fund' or payment can be made by bank transfer if preferred. If you are a UK taxpayer and can give by Gift Aid, please fill in a Gift Aid envelope or advise me if you are registered with the Gift Aid Convener. Monies can be given to a member of the Committee, put in the Flower Committee pigeon hole or sent to the church office clearly marked for the Flower Fund. Please contact me direct on 0131 449 2866 or e-mail: irene_a_wilson@btinternet.com if you require details to make a bank transfer.

Do you have a talent for, or would like to try your hand at, flower arranging? Pending the imminent retirement of one of our members, and another who is reducing the number of weeks in the year when she is available, we would be delighted to welcome new members to join our team. Men are also most welcome - you can serve coffee so I'm sure you could arrange flowers too. Even if you are only available for a few weeks a year it would help.

If you would like to join us, or want to come along and see what it entails, please come and speak to myself or any other members of the Flower Committee on a Sunday morning. Training and guidance can be given if required.

Irene Wilson, Convener - Flower Committee



SPEAKER SUPPER: SIR PAUL GRICE

After a tasty supper, we had a very interesting evening on Friday 31st October listening to Sir Paul Grice, Principal and Vice Chancellor of Queen Margaret University talking about the value of higher education.

FEBRUARY MAGAZINE

Material for the February issue of the magazine should be with the editor, Alison Riddell, by **Friday 16 January** and it will be available by Sunday 1 February. Contributions should be emailed to editor@morningsideparishchurch.org.uk or put in her pigeonhole at the church.

Please note that there is no magazine in January.

THE HOLY SNOWDROPS

Of old, with goodwill from the skies,
The holy angels came;
They walked the earth with human eyes,
And passed away in flame.

But now the angels are withdrawn,
Because the flowers can speak;
With Christ, we see the dayspring dawn
In every snowdrop meek.

God sends them forth; to God they tend;
Not less with love they burn,
That to the earth they lowly bend,
And unto dust return.

No miracle in them hath place,
For this world is their home;
An utterance of eternal grace
The angel-snowdrops come.

George MacDonald

George MacDonald (1824-1905) was a weaver's son and Congregationalist minister who became an original writer of such fairy tales as 'The Princess and the Goblin'...often coloured by Christian and mystical symbolism or shaped by powerful allegories of good and evil. His vividly imagined adult fiction influenced C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien.



Christmas Blessings To All Readers!

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