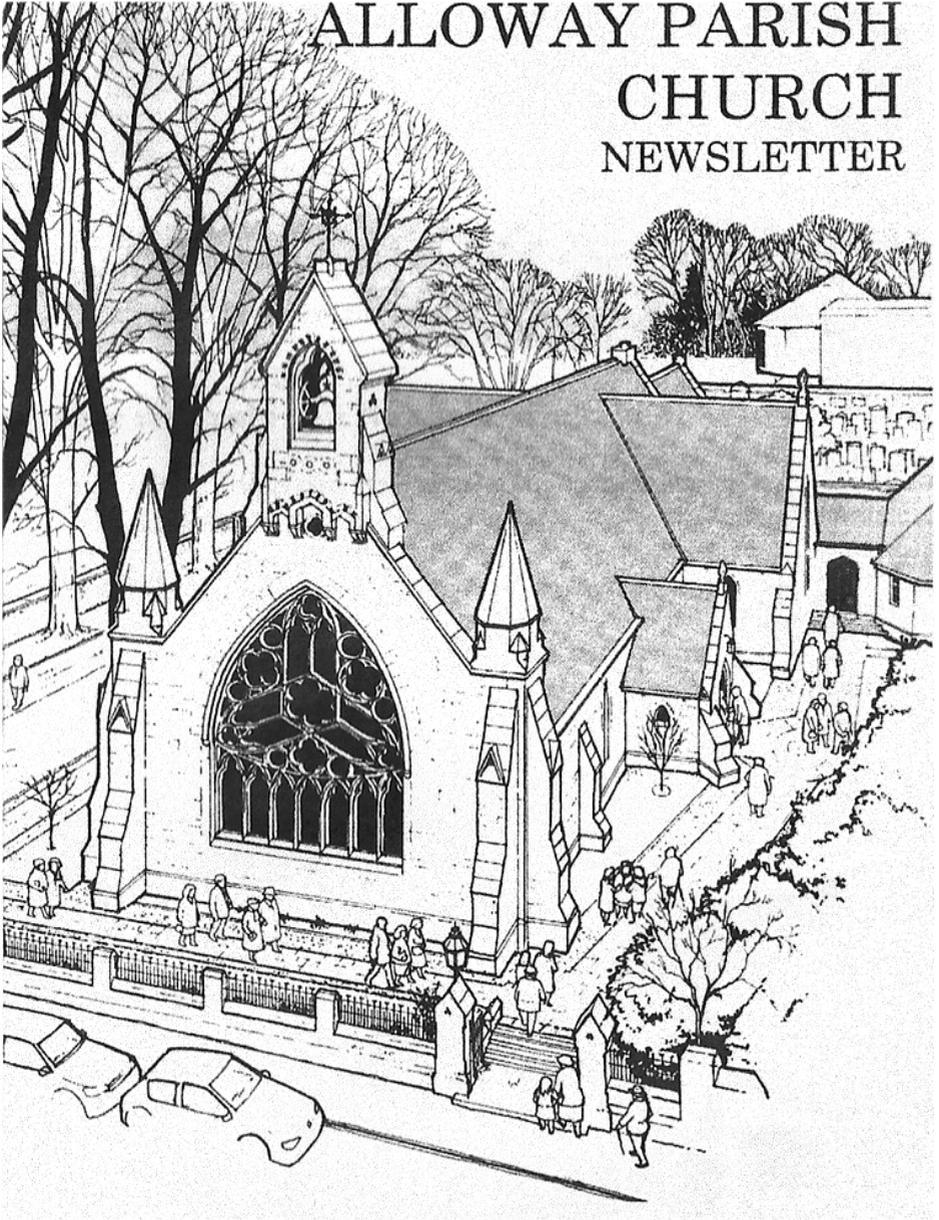


ALLOWAY PARISH CHURCH NEWSLETTER



December
2021



Dear Friends

As you read this letter perhaps you are bedecked and decorated for Christmas?

Christmas is an important time! I love the rich heritage of seasonal music.

It is a time, when as one commentator commented; the whole world issues "a sigh of belief".

How I wish it were so!

Some historians argue that Christmas is the mere "Christianisation" of a pagan festival.

When the hours of daylight are fewest, the warmth of the sun weakest, and life itself seemingly at a standstill, our ancestors kept the festival by lighting bonfires and decorating their buildings with evergreens.

Perhaps they believed that the dying sun could be enheartened by fire. With the advent of Christianity, the spring gods became identified with Christ, and the birthday of the sun with the birthday of the Light of the World.

The early church father Tertullian did not approve of Christmas decorations.

"Let those who have no light in themselves light candles!... You are the light of the world, you are the tree ever green...."

To me Tertullian sounds like an early Presbyterian or Scrooge. Yes you are right it takes one to know one!!

We are indebted to those who decorate our sanctuary at Christmas. It is heart warming to conduct worship in a place which is so clearly loved.

However, the place where Christmas really happens is in our hearts.

For it is there we need to welcome the Christ Child, His presence and His teaching.

The coming of this Child did indeed alter the course of history.

So too the coming of the spirit of the Child at Christmas can renew us in faith and hope and love.

I remember one Christmas my late mother, in the year she lost my dad, did not put up her decorations.

I understood her sadness. Christmas is such a poignant time!

However mum never gave up her faith!

My thoughts and prayers go especially to those who find this season difficult.

Let us recall that the presence of Jesus brought and brings light to many kinds of darkness.

May that light shine brightly upon you and yours.

Many thanks for your support of the church throughout this past challenging year.

From all at the manse

A Blessed Christmas and Good New Year!

Rev Neil McNaught



A note from Rev. David...

I am writing this little note on the first Sunday of Advent - how great it was to see the church decorated as we begin our journey towards Christmas day, and as we celebrate the birth of Jesus our Saviour.

I love the advent season - the Christmas decorations, the different church services (including the Christingle of course!), the Christmas songs and hymns, giving and receiving Christmas cards and presents, Christmas jumpers and of course the food!

It is right that we feel excited as we celebrate Christmas, but it is important that we keep Christ at the centre of our celebrations - it IS all about celebrating His birth and remembering the many gifts that we as Christians receive as a result of His birth, life, death, and resurrection.

For me, this is reinforced in the four Sundays of advent when we remember the gifts of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

Hope:

May the God of HOPE fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him so that you may overflow with HOPE by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13).

Peace:

Glory to God in the highest heaven, and PEACE on earth to those with whom He is pleased! (Luke 2:14)

Joy:

But the Angel said to them: "Do not be afraid, I bring you good news that will cause great JOY for all the people today in the town of David. A Saviour has been born to you, He is the Messiah, the Lord". (Luke 2:10-11)

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Love:

For God so LOVED the world that he sent his only Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. I pray that this Christmas you will have a sense of these amazing gifts from God and that you will be truly blessed with Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

God's richest blessings to you this Christmas.

David



28th December Holy Innocents Day

The death of a very young child is perhaps the hardest grief of all to bear. The 28 December is a very poignant day in the church calendar. It is when the worldwide Church joins with bereaved parents to grieve the loss of babies and young children. For Holy Innocents Day recalls the massacre of the young male children of Bethlehem by Herod the Great.

Herod had been told by the magi, or wise men, that a great king had been born in Bethlehem, and he felt shaken. How could a child in unimportant little Bethlehem be so powerful that the stars in the night sky honoured His birth? Herod took the magi so seriously that he decided to try and kill this new young rival. He decreed that every male baby of two years and under should be killed. (Matthew 2:1-18).

Bethlehem was not a large place, and Bible commentators estimate that between 6 and 25 infants were slaughtered by Roman soldiers. Their mothers would be inconsolable at the death of their babies, as indeed mothers have always been.

The death of these innocent baby boys of Bethlehem became a feast-day in the western Church by the 4th century. This was because the Church considered them to be martyrs because they not only died for Christ, but instead of Christ.

Down the centuries, the tragic loss of the Holy Innocents has touched the imagination and hearts of poets, preachers and artists. Though heart-broken parents still grieve today, the Church can offer them one firm assurance: that young children who die to this world will undoubtedly "this day be with Me in Paradise." The One who eagerly said "Suffer the little children to come unto Me" will be the last person to turn them away.

The Annunciation to the Shepherds



In that region there were shepherds keeping watch over their flock.

In the Old Testament shepherds were greatly valued and treated with respect. Patriarchs, prophets and kings had all tended sheep. Job, a rich man, owned 14,000 sheep. David was tending sheep when he was called by God and anointed by Samuel.

But as the Israelites settled in towns and cities and turned to farming, attitudes towards the shepherds changed. As the New Testament opens, shepherding had become a dirty, lonely life, away from civilisation. Shepherds could not observe the daily rituals of their faith, and so they had a low status in society, looked down upon by Orthodox Jews.

But out in the countryside with just the hills and the plains and the open air, St Luke tells us that it was there that God's message was proclaimed and heard. Cities and towns had walls and barriers, as Bethlehem has today. But in the fields at night, there were shepherds, watching and alert, ready for any eventuality. And so, they were the first to hear of the birth of a Saviour.

'The Annunciation to the Shepherds' is a painting by Sano di Pietro. We know little about this Italian artist apart from some dates. He was born in Siena in 1406 and died there in 1481. But he has left us a legacy of beautiful and sensitive paintings. As we look at this scene, we see the human details: two shepherds huddled by the fireside with their dog, all three looking up to see the angel, and a spear by the side to ward off

thieves and predators. The sheep are safely in their pen, black and white fleeces huddled together for warmth. In the sky the angel appears, bearing an olive branch in one hand and with the other pointing to Bethlehem in the distance.

Luke has already told us of another annunciation, with Gabriel visiting Mary. Artists loved to portray this scene and often showed a lily, the symbol of purity, in their paintings. Here there is the olive sprig, a symbol of peace to reinforce the angelic message of peace in the birth of the Saviour. Luke goes on to tell us how Jesus brought new meaning and peace to all those like the shepherds who were nobody in the eyes of people, but everything to the eyes and heart of God.

Jesus in His teaching often turned to the theme of sheep and shepherds, with parables about lost sheep, gates to the fold, and hiring shepherds. Just as the faithful shepherds were prepared to give their lives to protect the flock, so Jesus the Good Shepherd gave His life for the world - a death that would bring the peace and reconciliation shown in that olive branch held by the angel. At this Christmas time we rejoice with the heavenly host to proclaim the birth of this Prince of Peace and we commit ourselves to that work of peace and shepherding. Howard Thurman wrote these words:

'When the song of the angels is stilled...
when the shepherds are back with their flocks,
the work of Christmas begins:
to find the lost, to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among the people,
to make music in the heart.'

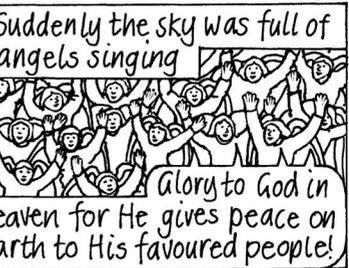


Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in Luke chapter 2 verses 8 to 20

Shepherds were paid to look after the flocks out on the hillside. Uneducated and rough, they were usually avoided, or overlooked.





Alloway Parish Church Advent And Christmas Services

Sunday 28th November	Advent Communion	10.30am
Sunday 5th December	Morning Worship Quiet Service of Remembrance	10.30am 7.00pm
Sunday 12th December	Christmas Carols and Readings	10.30am
Sunday 19th December	Family Worship with Christmas Angels Christingle (followed by fellowship in the church halls. Children dress up)	10.30am 3.00pm,
Friday 24th December	Community Singing Watchnight Service	11.00pm 11.30pm
Christmas Day	Family Celebration (Children bring toys)	10-10.30am
Sunday 26th December	End of year All Age Service	10.30am
Sunday 2nd January	New Year Service	10.30am

Christmas Jumper Sunday 12 Dec 10.30am

It's that time of year. (Bah humbug!)

Save the Children started the Christmas Jumper Day in 2012. So this is the 9th Year. I hope we can get in the Spirit and enjoy our worship of lessons and carols in style!



South Ayrshire Christmas Toy Bank Appeal

We are again acting as a drop-off point for the South Ayrshire Toy Bank Appeal this year. We have a box available for donations of new gifts/pyjamas (unwrapped please) for boys/girls and teens during Foodbank hours at our halls on a Sunday.

There is also wish list available:

on Amazon:

https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/XGROGKF573WB?ref=wl_share

or at Toytown in Ayr:

<https://www.toytownstores.com/search/sactb>

if you would prefer to donate that way.

Thanks to your generosity last year we handed over a fantastic collection of gifts for the youngsters in our communities supporting families experiencing financial hardship.

Lynda Mary

For more information, please visit their website:

<https://www.southayrshirechristmastoybank.co.uk/>

Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/SouthAyrshireChristmasToyBank/>



Blythswood Christmas Shoebox Appeal 2021

Once again, we had a wonderful response for this year's shoebox appeal and I am pleased to report we donated the wonderful total of 259 shoeboxes from Alloway Church.

These comprised of the following:

Girls - 71

Teenage Girls - 30

Women - 43

Elderly Women - 10

Boys - 69

Teenage Boys - 19

Men - 16

Thank you so much to everyone who got involved in anyway whatsoever. Your generosity and support is always very much appreciated. Including our own, a total of 6484 gift-filled shoeboxes have been checked and boxed up at Fullerton Connexions in Irvine by a dedicated team of willing volunteers ready to be shipped to Moldova.

Lynda Mary



Update from Malawi

Friends

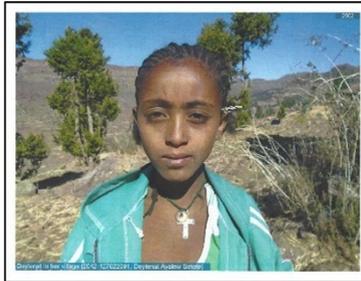
Neil asked me to give a short review of how climate change is being felt in Malawi from the eyes of Denis Kamata , headteacher at BAGSS. Climate change impacts directly on agriculture, the mainstay of the economy. It also has an effect on water supply, health, education, energy, wildlife but it is gender influenced on women especially. Little rain means poor crops and food shortages. Too much rain means flooding and again loss of crops and animals. These extremes can be experienced in some parts of the country in the one growing season. In urban areas public water supply gets disrupted and sewerage systems overflow spreading disease into the water supply. Conversely dry periods mean water shortages. Climate change is causing desertification and loss of biodiversity with silting up of rivers. People rely on government hospitals which are sparsely located and poorly equipped. Access to health care becomes difficult with flooding due to bad roads so critically ill patients lose their lives due to delays. Poor food or food shortage also lead to ill health through poor nutrition. Women are most affected as they walk long distances, even at night, to collect water and firewood. Their time is often diverted to nurse sick family members. Malaria increases in the wetter times. There is disruption with family quarrels emanating from shortages of food, firewood and clean water due climate change. Education is affected too with electricity supply issues and frequency of blackouts. It causes lack of food in schools, so girls abandon education in public schools and this often leads to more early marriages. This exacerbates the vicious cycle of poverty in Malawi. We try to focus on these issues with our girls. It is for this reason that we at BAGSS and indeed Bandawe Primary School, are so grateful for the continuing support we receive from Alloway Church and Alloway and Doonfoot Primary Schools.



Brownies

by 3rd Alloway Brownies Brown Owl Lise Whittle

3rd Alloway Brownies have had a busy few weeks. One night we found out more about Deytenat, the little girl in Ethiopia that our Brownies sponsor through the charity PLAN. Every week the Brownies are asked to do helpful jobs at home to 'earn' 50p/£1.00 to help sponsor Deytenat so that she can go to school, and to improve healthcare in her community. Every year we receive a photograph of her, and it is wonderful to see her growing up. We discussed how different her life might be to ours, such as not having TV, street lights, a car, or an indoor flushing toilet. We asked if the Brownies thought she was happy, and after some thoughtful discussion everyone agreed that she probably enjoys being with her family and friends and playing games just the same as we do. The Brownies got into their Sixes and were asked to invent a game from simple things that Deytenat would have - such as some pebbles and sticks - and each Six came up with a completely different and exciting new game!



Another week we had lots of fun at our Pumpkin Party. We played some action games, had a Hallowe'en Quiz set by Barn Owl Sonya, listened to a spooky story ('The Flying Dutchman'), and then played 'Captain's Curse' - similar to Wink Detective. Everyone who entered the Pumpkin competition won a certificate, and everyone received a goodie bag to take home. Here is one of Barn Owl Sonya's quiz questions - What does the word 'Hallow' mean? Spook / Spirit / Sin / Saint?

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Ten new Brownies made their Brownie Promise, they received their very special metal Promise badge and got to sign our Brownie toadstool. We all planted a daffodil bulb in a pot to take home to remind them of their Promise. I Promise that I will do my best, To be true to myself and develop my beliefs, To serve the Queen and my community, To help other people, and To keep the Brownie Guide Law. A Brownie Guide thinks of others before herself, and does a good turn every day.

For Remembrance, we listened to true stories about servicemen in WW1 and WW2. Each Brownie made a keyring with the name of one of the soldiers from Alloway War Memorial on it, and took home a Certificate about their soldier, and they wrote a postcard with what they would like to say to them.

Things are still a little different at Brownies at the moment, but everyone is managing to adapt well. We are looking forward to having lots more fun at our Christmas Crafts night and Brownies Christmas Party. We would like to wish everyone a Very Happy Christmas and New Year.

(Answer to Barn Owl Sonya's quiz - Saint)



Alloway Scouting Remembers

Unfortunately the young boys and girls from Alloway Cubs, Scouts and Explorer Scouts could not attend this years Remembrance Service and parade, but that did not mean we were not part of Alloway's remembrance.

On the evening of Friday November 12, twenty six of our Explorer Scouts (aged 14-18) met at Rozelle Park. Each one assumed the persona of one of the Alloway soldiers from World War 1 and we marched together over to the Remembrance Wood.

Once there, on a dark, damp November evening, we walked steadily through the events of the Great War, pausing by each of the carved sculptures to tell some of the real life stories of the characters we were portraying. We learned of happy events, of families, marriages, babies and chance reunions, but ultimately also of the many ways and places that each lost their lives.

The Explorers all started the walk with a lit torch, and as each one met their untimely end they switched off their torch to walk in the shadows.

By the end of the walk we only had 2 torchlights remaining, representing 2 members of the Dill family, children of Rev Dill, minister of Alloway Parish at the time, and who lived in The Manse.

From Rozelle we then walked to the memorial outside the village hall and there followed the sobering moment when the children found some of the names of the soldiers we had been talking about all evening, suddenly the seriousness of it all started to hit home.

We read 'In Flanders Fields' followed by our own 2 minute silence which was observed impeccably, and then laid our wreath.

We filmed it for anyone interested, its dark and windy, but somehow feels eerily appropriate.

The video can be seen at <https://youtu.be/E1vNn0y4R4Y>

On Monday evening, the Cubs (aged 8-10) did a watered down version of the same thing but inside the church hall. They all lined up at the far end of the hall, this represented July 1914 and the start of the war. From there each step forward was a step in time and they sat

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down at the point which their character died, again we had 2 survivors.



The Cubs really understood the seriousness of subject and the reasons why we must never forget.

Thank you to the church for everything you do for us.

We will be back next year.

David Codling

Cub Scout & Explorer Scout Leader.

100th Ayrshire (Alloway) Scout Group

1st Alloway Company News



Since the Company re-enrolled at the beginning of September, we had the unique situation of two years promotions, senior awards and trophies all requiring handing out. Eight Queens Men of 2020, were presented in the Church by the Deputy Lord Lt. and Rev Neil McNaught.

The boys, requested that all promotions, Duke of Edinburgh Awards and Presidents Badges be done inhouse on a Friday parade night. As a result, on the first Friday in October 18 DoE's, 10 Presidents and all the promotions of 2020 were issued. Trophies they decided should NOT be awarded 2019-21.

The 2021, winners of the Queens Badge have still to be presented along with two of 2020 who were AWOL (both had good excuses!) hopefully before Christmas.

In Dec 2020, the Santa Sleigh was a major success, 5 charities each received donations of £500 and around 2.500 people lined the street corners in an amazing community morale booster. In December this year (13-17) the Sleigh will once again be touring the Alloway Parish.

As a result of the donations etc - a gentleman insisted on funding a night at the Go-karts for all the boys who had been involved. So 24 Boys and a few staff made the trip to Scot-Kart for an evening, travelling by minibuses and stopping for McDonalds on the returns trip. Appreciated by all.

As part of the Ayr Battalion, several boys and staff have been assisting at a couple of other Companies who have either staff or senior boy shortages. This has given the boys additional leadership skills and a confidence exceeding their age. Not to mention new friends and the thanks of at least 2 parishes.

Our Event Management Project was mothballed during Corvid. Once the restrictions were removed boys of the company were involved in two events - Scottish Bee Society Annual Show and an open Band event by Endurance - both events being successful and attended by between 500-1000 enthusiasts.

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With restrictions in place, no inter-company competitions are available. But inhouse squads are competing at sports on a weekly basis: Crab football, Go-karts, basketball, volleyball and band night. We even had the use of indoor Curling - curtesy of the Ayr Curling Club which was very competitive.

The band has been the main casualty of Covid, no meetings to practice. Social distancing plays havoc but must be maintained.

The Anchor Boys, under the leadership of Mrs Heather Doak, is coming along nicely. Sixteen boys enjoyed a Halloween party. Assistance is given by Miss Dawn Grey and two Senior NCOs of the Company. All in all, a happy boisterous group of boys, learning and developing.

Acting Lt. Aidan Moore, has taken the reins of the Junior Section and is weekly, creating a very busy fun filled lively programme for the boys. He also has a senior NCO as his righthand man.

Due to our ongoing programme and activities the Company was awarded a £500 grant for appropriate sports equipment for all three sections . This was from The Woman's Guild in conjunction with Brigade Scotland who are keen to support active uniformed youth organisations .

The main question on the boys minds -"WHEN are we going to Camp again". Staff have this on board and are in the process of organising a fully active and challenging programme.

Nearly all of the local shops advertised the Company - Iceland, Hollow Park Newsagent, The Loaning Shop, Alloway Village Shop, The Coop, Secret Garden, Fishpluschips and Belleisle Conservatory. It's sad, but as a result of Covid, many parents are keeping their children on a short leash Xbox and telly only.

Thankfully, the nucleus of the 1st Alloway is dedicated, committed and loyal.

Stewart Robertson

Company Captain

CHRISTMAS CAROLS – FIRST LINES!

How many carols can you decode?

Work out what each carol is by decoding the first line – the first letter of each word is given. For example, SNHN is 'Silent Night, Holy Night'.

1	AIAMNCFAB	
2	AIWFC (IMTFT)	
3	DTHWBOH	
4	HFIITB?	
5	HTHAS	
6	HYA MLC	
7	ISTS	
8	ISMKSC	
9	JB BJATW	
10	JB BJBR	
11	JTTW	
12	LDLD	
13	LTAIB (MBC)	
14	OCAYF	
15	OCNACS	
16	OCOCE	
17	OCTOCT	
18	OIRDC	
19	OLOSOLOM	
20	OTFDOC	
21	RTRNR	
22	SNHN	
23	TAGFHC	
24	TFNTADS	
25	THATI	
26	WCIT	
27	WSWTFBN	
28	WTKOOA	
29	WWYAMC	
30	SCICTT (song title)	

Parish Record



"In My Father's House are Many Mansions"

28.10.21	Mrs Nancy Maine	Chapelton Crescent
25.11.21	Mrs Shirley McGill	Mount Charles Crescent

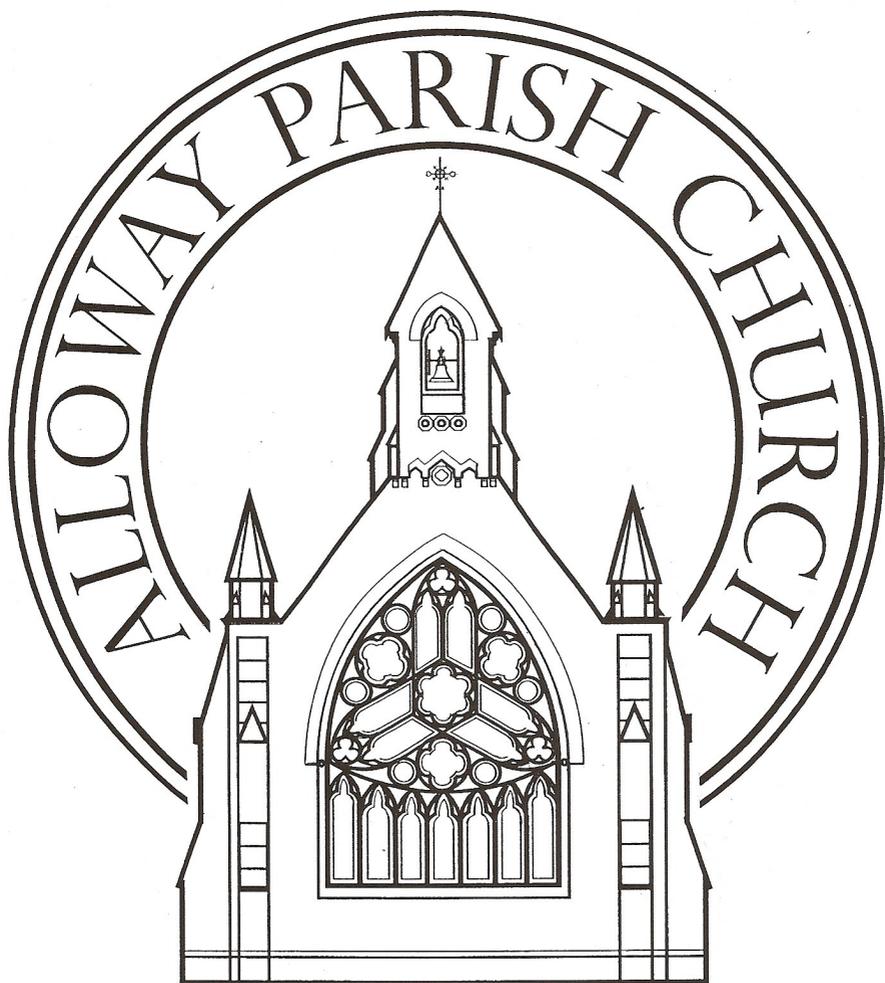
"Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"

Deadline for January Newsletter—Tuesday 21 December—12 noon

Contributions should be sent to:

allowaychurch.newsletter@gmail.com

Please visit our website www.allowaychurch.org or our Facebook page



Alloway Parish Church of Scotland
No. 100538

Scottish Registered Charity
No. SC012456